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MYSTERY
ST. RVLE'S



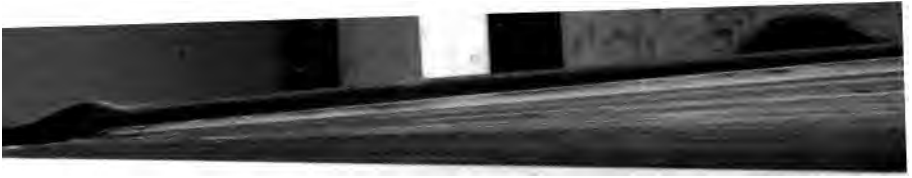
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Bessie F. Thorp
March 1902.

A · MYSTERY · OF · ST · RULE'S





A MYSTERY
OF ST. RULE'S



BY

ETHEL · F · HEDDLE

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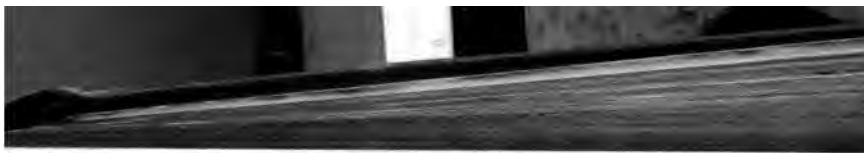


To
My dear Mother





*Thenceforth in dreams must we
Each other's shadow see
Wandering unsatisfied in empty lands;
Still the desired face
Fleets from the vain embrace,
And still the hands evade the longing hands.*
—A. Lang.



CHAPTER I

Seventy Times Seven!

“And we are told, Davida,—we are told—that we are—ahem—to forgive unto seventy times seven.”

The Professor might well cough apologetically, for Davida was looking at him with severe eyes, untempered by the slightest tinge of repentance, and his voice gradually died away into silence under the chilling reception of this Scriptural reminder. Davida could quote Scripture, on occasion, too, but she was not fond of having its power turned upon herself. On this occasion, also, it was doubly annoying, for she had meant to launch several well-chosen bolts, in the way of texts, herself.

“I ken a’ that, sir,” she began at last, after an extremely chilling silence; “I ken thae words weel. I hae thocht o’ them mysel’, when I’ve focht wi’ mysel’, as regards Forret! Mony a time, when I’ve sweepit up aifter him, and washed the whole o’ my kitchen-floor aifter his clairy feet, I’ve said to mysel’, ‘Davida, seventy times seven!’ Noo, aifter this, I’m gaun to coont.” She spoke with

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awful and portentous solemnity. "I'm gaun to begin frae noo, and, aifter seventy times seven —(I'll coont that up when I've peace at night in the kitchen)—aifter that I'm dune wi' him! I'm thinking he'll reach the limit!"

There was another pause. It was so dreadful, that at last the Professor, his hand wandering nervously about the brass base of his microscope, was driven into speech. This was a pity, as he said, as usual, the last thing which he ought to have said, thus supplying Davida with a new opening.

"But, Davida, you know I must have said that he might eat the lunch."

"Said!" Davida echoed scornfully. "Ye ken very weel, sir, that when ye're engrossed wi' they chemicals i' the laboratory, ye wad say onything! Had Forret asked for yer heid, or for a cheque on the bank for every penny ye possess, ye would hae said 'Certainly, Sandy!' and gaun on wi' your work, content, sae lang as onybody would let ye be! I had taen in the lunch mysel' on a tray; there was the breast of a chicken, and some fine mashed potatoes mixed wi' cream—picture me mashing potatoes wi' cream for Sandy Forret!"

Davida broke off at this point, as if the recollection was altogether too overwhelming, but seeing that the Professor's hand was wandering again to his microscope, she continued hastily: "And there



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was a glass of sherry, and a lunch-roll heated in the oven. I took it a' in, and moved a lot of bottles aff the table, and I said, 'There is your lunch, sir'; and you said, 'Yes, ~~yes~~, Davida', and I gaed awa'; which was fulish o' me," Davida admitted again in parenthesis, "for I should ha' stood ower ye till ye ate it! When I cam' in for the tray, just before lunch, a sicht met my een that turned my very blood cauld! There was Sandy finishing the last morsel off that plate, and then drinking the glass o' sherry!"

"Yes, yes, Davida; but I have already explained that I must have given him permission, that I really had no time for lunch to-day."

Much harassed, he had at last plucked up courage enough to apply his eye to the microscope, and was already relapsing into thought over the section under examination, when Davida began again despairingly: "Then you'll no' give him his leave? There's nae use o' my speaking? Will ye no' answer me, sir?"

"Certainly not, Davida! Forret has his faults, and occasionally, I fear, drinks more than is altogether wise—"

"Athegether wise!" Davida ejaculated with uplifted hands.

"But, at the same time," the Professor continued imperturbably, "he is a most intelligent man, with

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almost a scientific turn of mind. His touch is exceedingly careful—unless he is not quite himself. He has not broken a single piece of apparatus this year, and the last man I had created a perfect havoc. I was thankful to get Sandy back.”

“Weel, we hae a’ oor crosses!” Davida got to the door in settled despair, where she stood for a moment, her spare figure in its neat dark-blue skirt and white apron outlined against the brown paneling of Professor Luttrell’s study, and then, seeing that he was quite absorbed, and paid not the slightest attention to this pathetic observation, she left the room, and, passing through the drawing-room, went along the tiled hall towards the kitchen. Sandy, absent, had worsted her once more.

The wide shallow staircase wound up through the centre of the hall to the long corridor which ran the entire length of the house, and it was lit by a fine window of stained glass, mullioned after the same fashion as the windows of the little ruined chapel which stood just before the house. Shafts of October sunshine were falling through the window now in rays of crimson and gold, and they caught the figure of a young girl, in a brown dress and a sealskin jacket, who was running lightly down-stairs. Davida paused at the foot of the staircase, and her expression changed to the softest look her grimly - featured old face ever wore. She had,



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indeed, lavished all the intense love of which her curious nature was capable upon two people only—upon Molly's mother, who had died at Molly's birth, and upon the girl herself.

"Davida, you are looking as stern as if you were an executioner about to see the axe descend!" Molly cried in her bright voice, pausing to button her gloves half-way downstairs. "What is it? Has Bethia broken anything, or is Daddy the delinquent? Or have six cases of stones arrived from Aberdeen with ten-and-sixpence to pay on each?"

"No, Miss Molly. There were three cases yesterday, so we will maybe hae a rest for a time," Davida answered grimly. "It is no' that, for if your father chooses to spend a small fortin' on the North o' Scotland Railway Company it is no concern o' mine, though I'm no' saying but what money could be better employed. It is Forret! The awful impidence o' that man turns me cauld, as I telt the Professor this day!"

"Oh, Sandy!" and Molly laughed carelessly. "I really cannot share your hatred of poor Sandy, Davida, he is so amusing; but I'm awfully sorry I can't wait to hear all about it now. You see, I have to be at the station at four to meet Miss Luttrell. I thought we would drive up in the omnibus, for they say Americans never walk, and

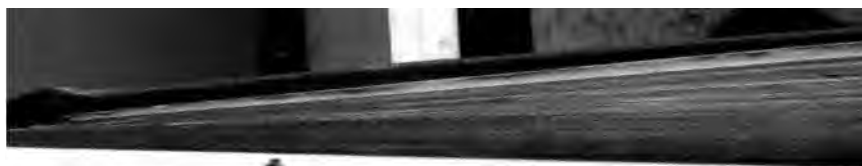
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it is dreadfully muddy to-day. I hope Daddy remembers about her coming; you might remind him, if you are in, and say dinner will be at 7.30." And then Molly ran off, lightly, and Davida could see her speeding past the little iron gate of the ruin and up to the street.

It was a good long walk to the station through the gray old street, where the shattered towers of the Cathedral rose behind Molly Luttrell in the pale fading light of the October day. A very quiet little street on most days, though a few red-gowned students were standing at the archway entrance to St. Mary's College, where Molly, as she passed, looked in at the bare black branches of "Queen Mary's Thorn". The girl seemed to know all the pedestrians she passed, and she stopped to speak to two old maiden ladies who were walking with much dignity towards her.

"I am so sorry I cannot stop now, Miss Gardiner," she said, "not even to ask after the parrot. But I am coming to call upon you soon, and to bring my American cousin." And then she was gone, speeding down the road, as four o'clock boomed slowly from the solemn tower of the College Church.

She had left herself rather scanty time, for the train had come in when she got down to the station, and a tall girl in a crimson skirt and a



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little fur toque was standing by a huge American box, laughingly interrogating a fearfully silent porter, who was heaving up the briefest of brief answers as if with a mighty effort.

"That must be Eve," Molly said to herself; "she is no St. Rule's girl at all events." She went up, holding out her hand and smiling brightly.

"You must be my cousin?"

"And you must be Molly! I am so glad that you are Molly!" The rich sweet voice—a curiously vibrant voice that lingered in one's memory—took Molly's fancy at once. It ended with a little enigmatical laugh, and the stranger was looking with smiling eyes, that had an earnest, yet relieved look, at the soft, small outline of Molly's girlish face, up to the straying curls of dark hair on her forehead. Her own face seemed to the other's admiring eyes a kind of revelation—a revelation of grace and of beauty, that struck the young girl with almost a shock of surprise. Somehow beauty brings a kind of bewilderment about it always, a sense of keen delight; and Molly had been little out of St. Rule's, and was quite, as she expressed it herself sometimes, "a country mouse". It was delightful to think that this was her own cousin, the Evangeline Luttrell of whom she had thought so much since the American girl's letter came.

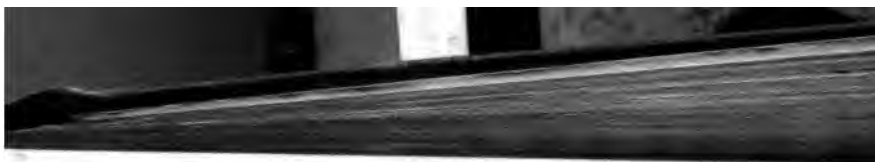
Molly had read the letter, as she read all her

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father's letters. It had been from an American lawyer in New York, and stated that by the late Hugh Luttrell's express desire, which he had taken care to endorse in his will, his daughter Evangeline was to spend a year, before she came of age, under her uncle's roof. Her father regretted the long silence and severance between the two brothers; he hoped the separation between the two families was now at an end. Molly had begged her father to write at once, and he had promised to do so; but she had failed for once to see that her entreaty was carried out, and the next thing had been the arrival of Evangeline's letter, announcing the fact that she was in London, and would be in St. Rule's early in the week. She had been unfortunate enough to miss her uncle's letter in New York.

Evangeline would not hear of using the rumbling old omnibus now. She said she wanted her first glimpse of St. Rule's at once, and she was so delighted with the distant glimpse of the Cathedral towers fading fast into the night's embrace, that Molly felt sure that she was going to be a kindred spirit.

"It is quite enough for me that Queen Mary lived here," the girl said. "Hers is the character which most entrances me in all history. Oh, Molly, I never saw anything more beautiful than that light behind these broken towers! What is



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that wonderful old arch? Where does it lead to? I feel as if I could not go in!"

"There is tea," Molly said smilingly, when they passed down a lane shaded with trees and the little chapel came in view.

"Molly, do you tell me that I shall live in a house which faces this ruin?"

"I hope so," Molly said; "I hope you will live here for a long, long time!"

They stood for a moment under an old laburnum-tree, whose twisted trunk and brown branches were covered with the dead sprays and misty foliage of a trailing wisteria, and Evangeline looked from the broken mullions, and the clinging ivy, and the damp tombstones, back to the old house, whose carved windows were beginning to twinkle now with many lights. The breath of the October night was fresh and sweet in either face. There was a deep hush everywhere. She heaved a curiously long sigh. "I feel as if I had walked into an old, dead world! Oh, Molly, I am going to be very happy! One could not be anything but happy here!"

"I hope so," Molly said; "I do hope so!" Then they went in together, and the night closed behind them.

Professor Luttrell was roused by the sound of

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the dressing-gong at seven, and as he was feeling for once a little tired, he went upstairs to dress, wandering into the drawing-room in wonderfully good time.

Molly had gone to speak to Davida in the kitchen, so that when a vision in a white evening frock, with masses of wonderful red hair, came floating into the room, Professor Luttrell, standing before the fireplace and absolutely lost in thought, looked up in amazement, the letter from America, Davida's warning, and Molly's injunctions of the morning having all vanished from his mind. He was wondering who on earth she could be!

"I think you must be my uncle, you must be the Professor?" Eve said with outstretched hand; and then, as the old man looked amazedly in her face, her expression changed a little, and there was a faint chill in her voice: "I think you got the letter? But perhaps you had forgotten?"

"Oh, Eve, do forgive him, he forgets everything! You naughty wicked old Dad!" Molly cried, running up just at this point and shaking her father's arm. "He would forget to eat his meals, if Davida and I didn't watch him! He often does forget! Dad, it is your niece, it is Eve Luttrell."

"Of course, my dear, of course; I am a most unpardonable—a most unpardonable boor!" He put one hand on the girl's shoulder, looking gently



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and kindly into her face. He had not been very devoted to his brother. He was thinking there was no look of Hugh in those clear amber eyes. They were very lovely eyes.

"I am very glad to see you, my dear, very glad indeed. I hope you will be happy here, with Molly and me." And then he turned away, speaking his own thoughts aloud as he sometimes did, without the slightest consciousness. "A very beautiful girl, indeed a singularly beautiful girl! But not the least like poor Hugh—not the very least like poor Hugh. Which is really a mercy!"

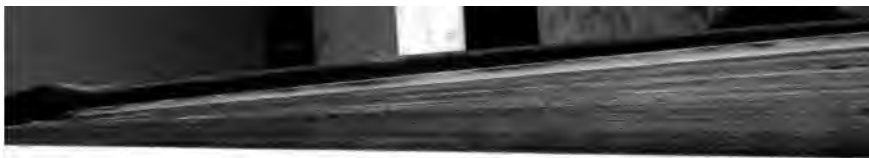
Molly laughed, half-abashed, turning to explain; but Evangeline Luttrell had turned away, and Molly did not see the expression on her face. It might have surprised her.

They went in to dinner then; they got to know each other very easily, Molly thought. She fancied it must be American to be so frank, and bright, and friendly. Somehow a new spirit seemed in the old house that night. Eve made them all laugh—even her uncle; for Molly and he were apt to relapse into silence at meal-times, the Professor's mind lost in nebulous clouds where his daughter dared not follow. He listened to the girl's gay chatter to-night with almost an awakened look.

For Molly's sake he was glad Hugh had sent his

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daughter here. Poor Hugh had not been a pleasant man in life. He had always rubbed his brother up the wrong way, and he had been hopelessly unscientific! Professor Luttrell never could forget that on one occasion he had said, "Science was a poorly-paying concern". But we all forgive the dead, of course; and he could humbly hope that in a future state Hugh had learned better. And he thanked Heaven the girl was not in the least like his brother. He hoped that was not wrong.



CHAPTER II

The Man in the Cave

“And who is this Neil Cameron, Molly? He seems to come in a good deal into the conversation. Is he perhaps—your Neil Cameron?”

Molly blushed, of course, blushed delightfully, with a pink colour that suffused her creamy face, and Eve looked at her with a curiously gentle look. She had grown fond of Molly. She laughed, then, very lightly and gracefully. “I see! There is no answer necessary. And is he very nice? Good enough even for you, Molly Machree?”

Evangeline Luttrell had settled into her uncle's house in a way that was surprising. The household felt, indeed, that it seemed impossible, even in this short time, to imagine a time in which she had not been there. She filled a niche which seemed to have been always waiting for her; she was so full of life and the joy of living. Indeed, it was almost curious, Molly thought sometimes, how absorbed her cousin was in St. Rule's people and politics, and how little she ever talked of her old life. She seemed, indeed, almost to avoid the

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subject; and at last Molly, who had the most delicate intuition, allowed her to have her own way and rarely asked questions.

"Don't let us talk about the States. Everything is so new there, and I only love old things and old scenes. At least, don't ask me to talk of anything but St. Rule's at present."

This was insidious flattery, of course, and she was allowed to have her own way.

The only personage, it may be said, who did not yield so rapidly to Eve's charm as the others was Davida.

Davida prided herself upon the fact that she herself was "no easy to ken", and she always judged people slowly and carefully. There was no hurrying her likings, no taking her affections by storm.

"Hae ye lived wi' them?" was her caustic enquiry, if man or woman happened to be praised in her presence. "I like aye to live wi' folk afore I can say I ken them. There's weemen and men that's verra pleasant i' the street, and for an afternoon's ca', that's the verra deil i' the hoose wi' ye. Live wi' them afore ye say ye ken them, if ye're wise."

Eve, on her part, took a malicious delight in half-puzzling, half-fascinating the old servant. She would sit in the kitchen for an hour at a time, her elbows on the immaculately white table, while



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Davida baked or brewed, asking a hundred questions, and listening to Davida's stories with her delicious gurgling laugh; but the old woman was wary, and she would not answer Molly's raptures with the swiftness which her charge expected.

"I am no' saying but what she's awful bonny, and real taking, but she's no' that easy kent—she's something like mysel'," and Davida would chuckle grimly as she walked away.

"If you blush so delightfully, Molly, I won't go on questioning you, but do tell me if the wedding is to be soon?" Eva said now, fastening her jacket before the glass, and tying a soft scarf of dull sage-green, that was an exquisite contrast to her ruddy hair. "I hope it isn't to be very soon."

"We have fixed no time at all; Neil is only an assistant to the professor of medicine, and Daddy could not do without me," Molly said. "But I don't think we are either of us the least impatient; we are very happy as we are. We don't want to rush into matrimony. The ante-room is too pleasant!" Molly laughed.

She sat looking out of the window into the old-fashioned garden as she spoke. It was a sweet old place, and Gloire de Dijon roses, the last of the year, were hanging in great yellow balls under Eve's window. There was an alley of white-rose bushes on one side, and the plots had been full

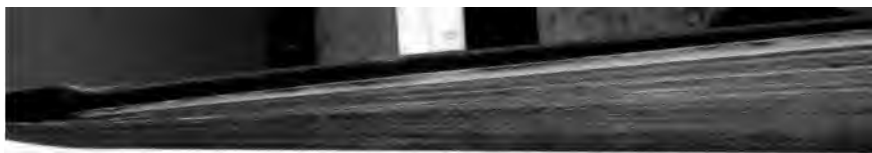


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of sweet old-fashioned flowers. Even now the dahlias were bright still, and the red tassels of a wonderful old fuchsia climbed amongst the roses, and winter pears were hanging thick on the fruit-trees on the red-brick walls. Just across, on the left, was the new hall for resident students; much to Davida's annoyance that building had been planted next door, and occasionally manly faces observed her hanging out clothes on the ropes, and waxed as facetious as they dared.

The girls were not going out together now, for Molly had calls to pay, and Eve fought rather shy of calls. "I am going down by the shore, beneath the Castle," she said as they separated in the hall downstairs. "I like exploring, and after I know St. Rule's thoroughly I shall come with you, Molly Machree,—not till then."

It was not far from the Professor's house to that ancient and historic Castle, a very nest of history, which stands bare and ruined now on its rocky ledge, with the white sea foaming underneath and long waves rolling in to cover the cruel and jagged rocks. The tide was out to-day, so that Evangeline could clamber under the walls, and along to her left towards the yellow sands where Queen Mary rode when she was a "bourgeois wife" in St. Rule's. Eve's mind was full of the past; she was imbibing the story of the place



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with every breath, and had spent long evenings over books of history, which Molly had brought for her from the University library, half-amused, half-pleased at the other's eagerness.

"I can't understand people being afraid of ghosts," the girl said to herself now, as she looked up at the broken outlines of the Sea Tower. "For myself, I should love to have second-sight! I should love to meet all these wonderful old ghosts—to see Queen Mary shooting at the butts with Bothwell in the merchant's house over the way, to meet the wily old Cardinal, to recognize the phantom coach of the murdered Archbishop thundering down South Street at midnight! But, alas! I don't believe in them, and I sha'n't have the luck to meet them." She turned away then to pick her steps over the loose stones of the boulder-strewn sands. She went slowly and carefully, pausing now and then to look seawards, and over to the other shore, where the distant blue hills were growing faint and ethereal—like dream-hills over the sea of a mirage. Walking thus slowly she came at last to a narrow opening in the rocks, a mere slit it seemed, and she paused before the entrance, curious and interested. Molly had not mentioned any caves.

"A cave, and I love caves! I wonder if it opens out, farther in."

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The rocks were so narrow at the entrance that she had to squeeze past, a dull-red sea-weed, that was like the fine plush paper on a lady's boudoir, brushing against her jacket. Soon she had emerged into a wider space, and to her surprise heard a voice from above, coming apparently from unseen heights.

"What the dickens are you doing, Murdoch? Have you dropped the matches as usual?"

Eve could see then, as her eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, that a strong beam was thrown across two rocks above her, from which a rope was dangling, and then a little trickle of gravel came falling down, and the Scots voice went on: "I really believe, Murdoch, that there is something in the theory about this leading up to the passage in the Scores. Upon my word, it is a fascinating theory. Fancy the whole place honey-combed with these passages! Think of the history of it, and of the romance! If I were an American millionaire I'd spend thousands on excavations in St. Rule's—find the crypt under the Cathedral, and set experts to work on the passages too. But being simply a poor Scot, I can only dig my little dig"—another shower of gravel—"and ruin my clothes. Why the dickens don't you light that lantern and hold it up? What are you about?"

Eve saw an old-fashioned lantern then, and a



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box of matches at her feet, and with sparkling eyes she lit it, and held it high above her head.

"That's better!" said the unseen voice; "but aren't you coming up to help, you lazy beggar, or has your ardour cooled already? We can put the lantern on the ledge. What are you muttering? I wish to Heaven you'd speak out!"

"I don't think I'll come up," Eve said, in a voice as closely assimilated to the speaker's own as she could manage; and then came another "You're a lazy beggar!" and a good-natured growl.

"I wonder who he is!" Eve was thinking as more streams of gravel and loose earth trickled down into the cave. "He seems to be digging for a passage, and it must be so fascinating that I have not the heart to stop him."

"Don't believe I can get any farther to-day," the voice said then. "And I expect it's getting late, and time I was back at the 'East Wind's'. I've a whole lot of exam. papers too, to correct. Beastly bother exam. papers, Murdoch, as you'll find when your time comes to grapple with them."

He seemed to stop work then, and presently he clambered down the rocks by a rope: a tall, broad-shouldered man, in rough tweed knickerbockers. He turned round and looked at the occupant of the cave with the broadest amazement, his blue eyes opening widely.

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Evangeline had her back turned to the sea, but the wind, redolent of the waves, had softly reddened her face, and something of the last light of the sunset seemed to the man to have caught the loose curls on her forehead, and to be enshrined in the wonderful colour of her eyes.

"I really beg your pardon," Evangeline said with laughter in her voice. "It was very impertinent, wasn't it, to stay and impersonate Murdoch? But you spoke as 'he who ought to be obeyed', and digging for a passage sounded so fascinating I hadn't the heart to stop you."

"Where on earth has she sprung from?" her hearer was saying to himself desperately, as he pulled off his cap. "She's not a St. Rule's girl, and I think she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in my life! But who in the name of wonder is she?"

"It is I who ought to beg pardon," he said rather awkwardly then. "But do you know, I think we ought to be going," with a hasty glance outside. "The tide seems to be coming in. I cannot think where Murdoch has gone!"

Evangeline went to the narrow entrance at once, finding that the waves were indeed beginning to tumble close at hand, and that the light was fading.

"I don't want to be drowned," she remarked,



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jumping lightly from stone to stone; "Molly would be so dreadfully scared! She would take it as such a reflection on her, and on St. Rule's hospitality."

"Molly!" He stopped in amazement, standing still on the wet sea-weed. "Do you mean Molly Luttrell?"

There was an accent on the name which seemed to enlighten his hearer, and she too turned and looked at him with more interest than before.

"Yes, I mean Miss Luttrell; I am her cousin from the States. And you are—yes, you must be Mr. Neil Cameron? Molly was telling me about you only to-day. I think you are a very fortunate man, Mr. Neil Cameron."

"Yes, I think so too," he said quite soberly and simply; and then they began to talk in the most friendly manner possible as they clambered along the beach, and presently up to the winding path which led past the Castle. It was cold in this light, and old and worn and desolate.

"I have fallen in love with your gray city," Eve said, looking up towards the great square tower beside the broken shafts of the Cathedral. "Only it is so stately and dignified that I feel that I have to approach it slowly. It would require a very, very long time, more than a lifetime, to know St. Rule's. As Davida would say, one would require to 'live wi' it lang'."

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"Do you feel that?" and he looked at her as if surprised. "I do, too. St. Rule's chills me sometimes, and I feel as if one could have no part in it. It belongs to other times, to dead times. And yet, nowadays, the golfers talk as if the links made St. Rule's. We are known as a fashionable health resort—the Scottish Brighton. One day an esplanade will come, and Christy minstrels on the sands."

"Oh, I should hate that! I have not been near the links yet!" she cried. "I can't get away from this end of the city. I have not grasped it yet."

They were passing down the cobble-strewn street, when two young men approaching caught sight of Cameron in the dusk, and one advanced towards him eagerly.

"Oh, I say, Cameron, I wanted to ask you—" He broke off then, perceiving the stranger, and murmuring rather incoherently that "any time would do", passed on into the dusk. A good-looking young man, but almost a boy it seemed to Eve, with fair hair and large light-blue eyes. His companion was a tall youth with stooping shoulders, and a thin absent-minded face.

"That was the Earl of Cantyre, one of the young aristocrats at the College Hall, over your garden-wall," Cameron said then. "His companion is a



The Man in the Cave

student they call 'The Cipher'; a very good fellow, but not brilliant. St. Rule's is a very little place; we know every second person we meet. After New York that must seem strange to you."

"Like a big family; it is delightful!" Eve said. "Are you coming in to see Molly?"

"For one moment, perhaps;" and then they walked down the lane together and stood for a moment by the ruined chapel. Everything was very quiet; a great hush seemed to brood over the roofless little church, and the lights were not lit yet in the old house. The ivy rustled gently at the side of the small iron gate, as Eve stood, with her slender ungloved hands upon it, looking in upon the broken tombstones and the rank weeds which thrust long stems between the cracks.

"Do you think Queen Mary came here for mass?" the girl said in a kind of whisper, turning with shining eyes towards the tall figure at her side; "the most fascinating figure, surely, in all St. Rule's history. May I picture her here, kneeling over at yonder confessional?"

"Yes, I think we may picture anything in St. Rule's," Neil said; "I fancy there is no reason why she should not have come here, and to St. Salvator's Chapel too. She was a mysterious woman, but I am afraid I am not a Mariolater. When I come here I always think of Lang's lines. Do you know

We loitered idly where the t
Fresh-budded mountain ashes b
Within thy desecrated wall:
The tough roots rent the tomb i
The April birds sang clamorou
We did not dream, we could not
How hardly Fate would deal v

The girl turned round as he finished his
sigh escaped her—

“ We did not dream, we could not l
How hardly Fate would deal wi

It was curious how the lines haunted them as they had gone into the house, and she went into the drawing-room, where Molly sat softly to herself in the dusk, and Da routed the Professor out from the library to take a belated tea under her own eye. Cameron with a smile of great approval, was evidently a favourite.

Eve went to dress, throwing off her head smiling to herself as she went.



The Man in the Cave

fessor's opinion he was 'sure to gang far'. A big scientific light, I suppose, of future days. Little Molly is very safe with him. They make a delightful pair. He is a typical Scot; I always had a fancy—" She broke off, then laughed, and began to take the fastenings from her wonderful hair. "I wonder what made him say those lines to me—

'How hardly Fate would deal with us!'

Fate can have nothing to do with him and me."

CHAPTER III

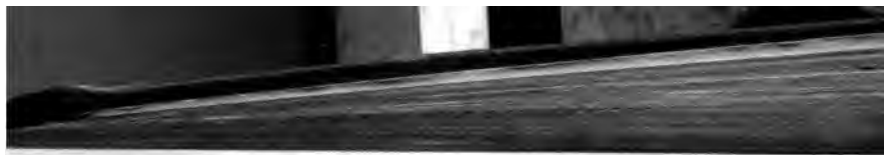
A 'Varsity Function

"Eve, I see you are ready. Would you go down to the laboratory and see if the Dad has come in to dress? He has still to dine, too. He would not come before."

A dainty vision in a foamy white petticoat, her dark hair over her shoulders, had appeared at Evangeline's door, and that young lady rose to her feet and smilingly laid down her book.

"You do look so lovely!" Molly said with a ring of purest pleasure and admiration in her voice; and after her friend had gone, she went back to her own room with the wonder still in her face. It was surprising, she thought, what beauty could do. For she had noticed that the white-and-blue dress on the bed had been rather faded and tumbled, yet now, upon the tall graceful figure, it seemed to take the most exquisite folds. One did not need to care much for dress, Molly decided, when one had hair and eyes like Eve's.

Eve had run through the sweet old garden, where a wind from the sea waved the branches of



A 'Varsity Function

the trees and rustled in the leaves on the red-brick walls, and she now opened the laboratory door, where the Professor was standing before a long bench, on which was a variety of weirdly-fashioned apparatus, with a background of shelves covered by bottles of chemicals. He was so absorbed that he did not even raise his head; but Sandy, who was watching a large basin filled with a thick, evil-smelling liquid, evaporating on the sand-bath of the furnace, looked up, and presently jerked his thumb towards the door.

"It's the young leddy from the hoose, sir. She'll be wanting ye. I've tell'd him twice, miss, that it was gaun seven. I ken there's the College pairty. But the Professor's thochts were on nae pairty."

He had concluded with a twinkle of his small light-gray eyes, and Eve smiled, going up to the Professor and putting her hand on his arm.

"Molly sent me to fetch you, Uncle. It is time to dress."

"Yes, yes, my dear, certainly." The old man was detaching his mind from his work slowly, but was still cloud-enveloped. "Certainly, of course. And I hope you will enjoy yourselves. Go and enjoy yourselves. I have dined, I think? I think I have had dinner, Sandy?"

"Weel, sir, ye may hae had it i' the speerit,"

A Mystery of St. Rule's

Forret returned, "but ye've no had it i' the flesh to my knowledge. And I ken I have no had my supper. It's no muckle that I eat, but I'm no like you, I forget neither my meat—nor my drink." Sandy permitted himself a cautious smile over the last word, and Eve laughed outright. She had been regaled at length with Sandy's entire history, and to the recital of his many delinquencies, from Davida, that very day.

"But, Professor, you are coming with us. Don't you remember? There is a big 'Varsity function on, and you promised to take Molly and me. It is my first appearance before the inner circle of St. Rule's (I suppose the 'Varsity is the inner circle?), and I must be well backed up. Come, there will be just a quarter of an hour for you to dress, and then Sandy can put out the lights and go home to his 'meat and drink'. Don't forget the last-mentioned, Sandy!"

The Professor yielded at once, having at last managed to remember Molly's stringent injunctions at lunch, and he went through the garden with his niece. Sandy remained behind to put a few things in order, and finally to put out the lights. He ruminated as he worked.

"She's a bonny leddy, wi' an awfu' sparkle i' her e'e!" he said to himself as he finally locked the door, and, going round to the kitchen-entrance, scraped



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his feet with much noise and ceremony on a large iron scraper which Davida had bought for this sole purpose. "Minds me o' Marget Flint; I micht hae been merret on Marget—she was gey bonnie—if she had saved a pickle. But she hadna a bawbee." Sighing over this recollection he walked through the kitchen, where Davida, bending over a saucepan on the fire, looked round sourly, and made no answer at all to Mr. Forret's carefully polite greeting. Sandy's eyes twinkled as he left the house, and he shook his head wickedly. "I'm an awfu' cross to that woman, a regular Old Man o' the Sea! But crosses are good for us a', and should be borne wi' the richt speerit o' humeelity! Davida doesna' bear hers humbly ava'."

After which he walked up the lane and down the gray old street, unwontedly busy to-night with flying cabs for the Reception at the College.

The Professor's dressing and dinner had taken longer than the girls had anticipated, though Davida had laid out every item of his toilet with the greatest care, and they were quite late in arriving. The hall of the College was a gay scene—a moving kaleidoscope of colour—the brilliant scarlet of the students' gowns and the varied colours of the ladies' dresses contrasting with the sober hues of the professorial costume. Upstairs the museum

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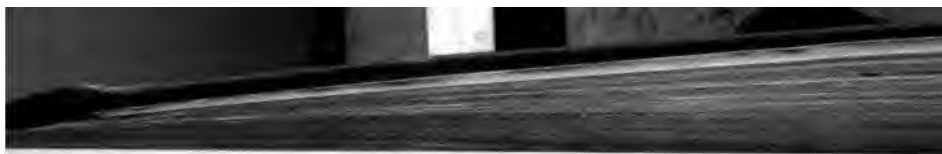
was thrown open, and here, as well as in the side-hall and stone staircase, there were crowds of young people, a very tolerable string-band discoursing music from below. Outside, over the moon-flooded quadrangle, the solemn tower of the College chapel shed its long inky shadow; but all was light and laughter within.

Cameron had met the Luttrells in the hall, and he came forward eagerly.

"I thought you were not coming," he said to Molly, though his eyes wandered to the tall figure in its white gown, with the cluster of purple velvet clematis in the masses of her hair. Her neck was like a white pillar. Her hair was like beaten gold or bronze. How beautiful was the whole poise of her light figure! He had never realized, surely, how beautiful a woman could be. He seemed almost to rouse with a start when Molly's little white-gloved hand touched him on the arm.

"I want to go and speak to the Principal with Dad," she said to Cameron. "Won't you take Eve and give her some tea?"

She had gone, on the Professor's arm, as Cameron turned round. He had not to bend at all to this tall figure. And then they went out into the wide entrance-hall, where little groups were scattered everywhere, and the music, a German waltz, wailed through the echoing roof in chords of cloying



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sweetness. Cameron felt like a man in a dream—as if someone, not himself, walked here with these cool slim fingers on his arm.

“Will you have some tea or coffee?”

They were very commonplace words, and he spoke almost with a jerk, as if rousing himself from a deep reverie. She had been curiously silent too, as if quite unaware of the curious looks which followed her.

“Do people ever really drink tea at these functions?” she said lightly. She had been watching him with a rather intent look. “I suppose that nothing so frivolous as an ice could be obtained? Why is it that tea and coffee should be sacred to conversaziones? The tea is usually boiled, isn't it, and slightly tepid? No, I don't think I feel drawn towards it; but can you take me upstairs to the museum? I want to see John Knox's pulpit. Is it the one he nearly 'dinged' down? I am not fond of John Knox, do you know? Is it heresy to say so? I am like Samuel Johnson, I have seen 'too much, sir, of his reformatations'.”

“Ah! that is looking only on the surface of things,” he said. “I think if you were to go on reading you would realize what a deep surgical operation the sickness of Scotland needed in his time.”



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"Oh don't, Mr. Cameron! That sounds so like a speech that Knox might have made himself. We don't like surgical operations."

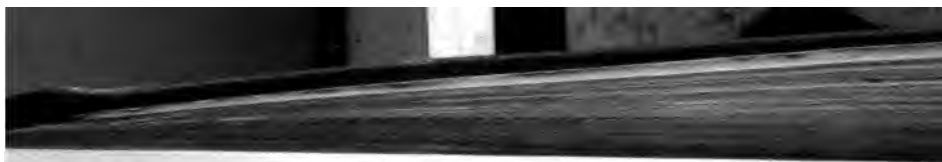
"Not at the time," he said; and then they both laughed, and he led her through the long room, pausing at many cases. They talked of many things; sometimes of the treasures within, sometimes, in a desultory way, of the past and its story. The time seemed to go by on wings.

"Had you any functions of this kind in your home in the States?" he asked after a little, when she said they must go back to Molly, and they were descending the great stone staircase; but his companion seemed to forget for a moment to reply, and then she said, rather coldly:

"I have never lived in a university town before."

They had reached the foot of the wide stone steps then, but the crush was so great that they were hemmed in for a moment, and both being "more than common tall", stood for a little, looking over the heads of the guests. The men looked at Eve's face—the women, first at her frock, and found a certain pleasure in its poverty.

"I have met a lot of people I know; everybody turns up at St. Rule's, sooner or later," a cheerful little man was saying, just in front of them. "It was quite refreshing to meet the 'East Wind' again,



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and I got a facer at once. 'What have you been about, sir?' he demanded of me. 'Cumbering the earth as usual?' A bit savage, wasn't it? Beresford knew me, and invited me to lunch. Fancy his lunches going on still! I wonder if he still invites the same elderly women. And there was Luttrell. You've heard of Luttrell?"

"Yes, and I particularly want to see him to-night. Is he the same as of old? Funny old chap, I remember."

"I was asking Leslie's assistant. He says yes. Luttrell's interest, you know, is always at fever heat on a different subject. Mineralogy, crystallography, chemistry, Egyptology, old china, botany, astronomy! At present, however, I hear he is safely tethered to some research work in his own branch, with only a few excursions, as a relief, into the dead languages now and then. Bernard was telling me he is the same absent-minded old soul. But you said you wanted to meet him. There he is, over yonder, with that pretty little dark girl, his daughter. She is out now, I believe,—a nice little thing. Mother was a cousin of Keppe-Carew's."

"I'll wait till they pass—can't get at them now," the other man said. "What a crush for St. Rule's! I went to get a cup of tea for a young lady, and never saw her again. She said she'd



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send up blue lights, or use grappling-irons, if I didn't return. The fact is, I want to see Luttrell's niece, who has, I hear, arrived from the States. I knew her father very well out there."

Cameron had been listening, half-unconsciously, to this dialogue, but he turned round, as the last speaker concluded, to look at his companion. She had been attending with a half-smile on her face, but the last sentence seemed to have changed her expression. Cameron, who had grown strangely interested in every varying mood pictured in those clear hazel eyes, saw, to his surprise, now that they grew suddenly hard and bright, curiously still and watchful. When she looked up she seemed to read a kind of surprise in his face, and he almost instinctively made a gesture, as if he would arrest the speaker.

The next instant her bare hand was upon his arm. "No, don't do that," she breathed in his ear. "I don't want to speak to him. It is stifling here. Can't you get me out somewhere into the air?"

He obeyed her at once, making a way for her resolutely, and they went towards the great entrance-door, where the crowd was not so thick, and where there were tables covered with cloaks and coats. To his surprise, Eve took her cloak from a maid and put it on; she was used, he knew, to acting determinedly, but he felt surprised when



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she turned to him, briefly and rather coldly. Intangibly, he felt that something had annoyed and displeased her.

"I am going to walk home, I think I have had enough of the Reception," she said. "You must go back to Molly, and tell her I had a headache. I hope you don't mind telling a grayish-white lie—I have rather a headache."

He stood still for a moment, then went and got his coat and hat. "You must not walk, there is a cold east wind, and that cloak is far too light. I shall come out into the quadrangle with you, and get your carriage."

They were opening the front-door, when the fair-haired boy they had seen on the first day of their meeting approached Cameron, and, touching his arm, begged for an introduction.

"I was looking for you, Miss Luttrell, with a message from your cousin," he said. "Don't say you're going already. Why, we are just beginning to warm up. Oh, please don't say you are going already!"

He spoke boyishly and earnestly, but Eve had moved to the door with a smiling nod, and though he followed them out persistently into the moonlit quadrangle, she did not seem to pay him much attention.

"Miss Luttrell wanted to introduce you to the

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Principal and to all the Dons," he said complainingly. "It has been a bit stuffy, but the rooms are emptier now, and I got the band to say they would play something lively. I say, Cameron, don't fetch Miss Luttrell's cab! Let's persuade her to come back!" He spoke so entreatingly that the girl could not help smiling. She turned and looked at him then rather wearily.

"Mr. Cameron would tell you that I am a young woman of immense strength of will, so I think you must let him fetch my cab, Lord Cantyre."

"Well, you can't go home alone, and I shall go with you," he announced calmly. "Oh, I really must! I undertook, as it were, to look after you when Miss Luttrell said you were lost. Besides, there are all sorts of ghosts about St. Rule's, and you might meet the Cardinal's phantom coach. It stops, you know, just opposite the Cathedral, and they fling out the dead body. It's a cheerful tale. You don't want to meet ghosts, do you, or phantom coaches?"

Cameron had gone to the other side of the quadrangle to look for the cab, and the two were left standing on the wide stone steps. The young man's eyes had never left the graceful figure at his side. Eve's indifference and inattention seemed to have no effect upon him at all. They certainly did not chill him.



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"You only entice me to go," she said at last. "I want to meet that coach. I should like to meet all the St. Rule's ghosts, as I tell Miss Luttrell every day. But I shall have no such luck."

"Do you like the place so much?"

"I love it. Don't you?"

"Oh, I don't know! You see, we're a bit held down at the Hall; it's only now and then we get a good lark. And then they all want me to grind, and I hate grinding. Of course, that is a prof's *métier*, to make a fellow grind. I'm not blaming them."

Evangeline seemed to be giving him only half her attention. She was looking up at the solemn tower of the church opposite, and she answered half-irrelevantly: "I want to go to the chapel tomorrow to examine the old tomb. I suppose one can go at any time?" She was really much more interested in it than in the boy beside her.

"Oh yes! if you make love to the janitor; and he is very good-natured. Cameron can't find that cab, Miss Luttrell. Shall we go and see what he is about?"

He had his cap in his hand, and they walked across the quadrangle, meeting Cameron as he returned with the vehicle at last. Evangeline got in, followed by the earl, who would take no denial.

Cameron's face clouded a good deal as he stood

A Mystery of St. Rule's

for a moment watching the disappearing cab as it turned through the wide stone arch and out on to the cobble-strewn street. How he would have liked to go with her, yet he had not dared express the wish, while Cantyre took his own way thus easily! These thoughts came to him, and then he seemed to realize with a start of what he had been thinking. What was he about? Why should he care who went with her? Molly was there, amongst the crowd inside. What right had he to picture this other girl driving through the solemn streets, her head bare in the moonlight, with its crown of ruddy gold, and the dark passionate clematis nestling amongst it? Molly! He had scarcely spoken to her all the evening!

He went back rapidly into the hall, and made his way to his fiancée at once, telling her of her cousin's departure; and Molly looked surprised and a little vexed.

"I thought she was enjoying herself," she said disappointedly and almost reprovingly to her lover. "She always seems to enjoy everything, and the Principal wanted to be introduced to her. I am afraid, Neil," and she looked up at him reproachfully, "that you cannot have entertained her."

To which accusation Cameron answered never a word.



CHAPTER IV

In the College Church

"I am so sorry that you were bored last night!"

The girls were going out next afternoon, Molly to see some old friends. She had been from home in the forenoon, so that they had been unable to discuss the events of the Reception.

"But I was not bored, Molly. I had a headache—no, I hadn't a headache! Oh, Molly, I can't tell you lies! It is those eyes of yours—those innocent eyes!"

"Lies?" Molly ejaculated in a kind of hopeless puzzle. "Why should you tell lies, Eve?"

"Why indeed? And you never tell them yourself, of course, Molly?—not even the convenient little gray fibs everyone makes use of?"

They looked at each other for a moment, something strained in the tone of her cousin's voice, driving the smiles from Molly's sweet face.

"I don't believe you do use them, or the Professor either," Eve said, as if ruminating. "This house has such a curiously clear atmosphere that I really feel sometimes as if I'd climbed a very high

A Mystery of St. Rule's

mountain, and that the air was altogether too rarefied. Even Davida—good gracious! to what awful depths would Davida consign me if she heard! I should be in that Hades she revels in, with the U.P.'s and the Roman Catholics, and all the other wicked and obstinate sinners of the world. Davida quite enjoys her hell—she would hasten a good many people there, if she could. I love Davida, but I know she regards me with awful suspicion. I'm not the Elect, Molly, and Davida knows it."

Molly had listened to these remarks quite unsmilingly, and there was a kind of startled puzzlement in her dark eyes. She was devoted to her cousin, but every now and then this fascinating creature seemed to pass to unknown depths where Molly could not follow her—there were times when the smiles left her lips and she was hard and cynical and bitter. She did not follow her now.

But she said no more regarding the reason of Eve's sudden departure from the Reception. Her cousin did not seem to wish to speak of it; it was to be a tabooed subject, as was her life in the States and certain other topics. So they parted, with a faint shadow between them, though Eve kissed Molly before she went out, with a little pat on the shoulder and a curious laugh. "I'm a bit of an enigma, Molly, am I not?"



In the College Church

"I am sure I puzzle her terribly, sweet as she is," the girl said to herself later, as she walked up the street, lost in thought. "I forget to play my part now and then; I have a wild, mad desire to tell her everything. That would mean ruin, of course, and I should have to go away at once. But I had no idea that deceit at St. Rule's would be so hard—so almost impossible! I want a little of the Uncle Geoff atmosphere; I think even a letter from Uncle Geoff would make me feel my old self again. It's a pity I kept my address from him."

And then she laughed, not pleasantly, but harshly and almost gratingly, turning in at the archway of St. Mary's College to look at Queen Mary's Thorn. "I should like to see it when the blossom is out—if it blossoms. I must ask Molly," she said; and then she went on to the College Church, where the janitor had promised to give her admittance. She stayed with him for some little time, however, talking and hearing his views on College politics, and then as the day was closing he admitted her through the gymnasium, which abuts on to the sacred edifice, to the church itself, and there left her. It was darker in the church than outside, and she wandered slowly down the aisle, looking at the stained windows, till she reached an old gray tomb of wonderful grace and beauty which was next the carved stalls of the Professors.

A Mystery of St. Rule's

"I wish I could see it properly—all these wonderful little niches and staircases," she said; "but it is growing too dark. Neil Cameron said he was a great and good man, this Bishop Kennedy. I wonder if he—"

Slow, soft music stealing down from the organ-loft then, made her turn her head, and forgetting about the Bishop's tomb, she wandered up the church. The organist was practising the Messiah music, and presently the soft chords of a recitative seemed to make her forget all else.

She sang, where she stood, suddenly and softly, her voice rising clear and liquid as it grew assured of its own power.

"There were shepherds abiding in the field."

The organist did not stop or look round—he played on, and presently the jubilant notes of "Rejoice Greatly" were pealing through the church. It is heavenly music, and this was a voice of wonderful sweetness and power. It mounted, climbing stairs of softest harmony till it melted in the vaulted roof and among the fading crimsons and gold of the windows—it died away, lingering softly in the delicate broken niches of the dead prelate's tomb.

She walked on then, as if conscious suddenly that she had betrayed herself, and the player broke into the grand crashing chords of the "Hallelujah



In the College Church

Chorus". But Eve had opened the door which led into the gymnasium, as if determined then to be gone, and she was proceeding to shut it after her, when she was aware of a figure at her elbow, and looked up, to see Cantyre's eager face.

"Please don't be angry. I was listening. I saw and heard you," he began rapidly. "I had come in here for my signet ring which I had lost, and I heard your voice; and, after that, I could not go. I could not help listening. You are not angry? Do you practise here with the organist?"

"The organist does not know me, nor I him," Eve said coolly, "and I don't intend that any one shall know who sang there to-night. The dark church tempted me, and I love Handel. He gets nearer heaven than any other musician—he carries one up to the clouds." She gave a little laugh then. "What a descent it must be for some of us!"

"But I never heard you sing before. You have not sung here before, have you?—in St. Rule's, I mean? Surely it is a sin to hide a voice such as that!"

"A very dreadful sin!" she said mockingly. "Well, I shall tell you something, Lord Cantyre, and in return you will please not mention that you heard me. Last year I intended going in for singing in public, but when I was being trained my voice broke down. I was ordered not to sing again for a long time. I had no business to break that

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injunction to-night. Even before I stopped, I could feel that I had about reached my limit—"

"It did not sound like that—it was lovely!"

"So you will not, please, say anything about this to anyone?"

She was making him a confidant! He turned upon her with an eager delight that was very boyishly and frankly expressed. "Of course I sha'n't! I sha'n't say a word. Of course, there are always things that one wants to keep to one's self! People are such gossips, especially in a little place like this, and you would be pestered to sing at every kettle-drum. Oh yes, they can gossip, even in St. Rule's! I know, Miss Luttrell, you regard it as a sort of enchanted city."

The girl laughed at that, carelessly and lightly. "Do they gossip about you?" she said indifferently. "Davida says that at the Hall you are an ill-behaved, regairdless lot! Davida is cook and housekeeper, you know, to Professor Luttrell, and she is quite a character; keeps the whole house in order, including myself. I am dreadfully trying to Davida. She is a great Brahmin priestess,—a priestess of the Established Church; and every other body, you know, is going to be consigned to the lower regions! She can't quite make up her mind where to place me—among the sheep or goats!"

He laughed at that. "I think I have seen her



In the College Church

when I called, and I have seen her in the garden too, when Ludlow used to chaff her over the wall, in the summer, and beg her for posies. He used to quote poetry to her by the yard. Davida looked as if she would have a fit of apoplexy."

Eve laughed, her bubbling irresistible laugh. "I wish I had heard, and seen Davida's face!"

"I dare say you will, if you are here in the spring. You will be?" he said eagerly. "There are buttresses on the other side of that old red-brick wall, and we sit and smoke there in spring and summer, and take a peep over at the Professor's garden now and then. We used to have huge fun with Davida on washing-days; she once threatened to throw some towels at Strathtyre. I am coming to call one day soon; I don't attend the Professor's classes, but I want to see his famous collection of minerals. He has got some wonderful stones, you know. Have you seen them? I believe he is quite an authority on minerals, as well as upon a hundred other things. I'm awfully fond of the old man."

"I have never seen the stones except from the outside of the cases," Eve said, and then walked to the door. "But I must be going."

He went out with her through the dark-vaulted archway which led to the College buildings, and he walked home with her through the early autumn dusk, talking eagerly. "My way is past yours,

A Mystery of St. Rule's

you know, so you won't mind my coming with you? Did you enjoy yourself last night, in spite of your hurried flight?"

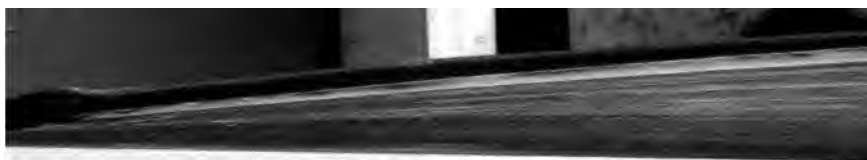
"Oh yes, I enjoyed it," she said, half-indifferently. "At least, I should have enjoyed it if I had worn a better gown. You men don't understand that, of course."

"A better gown!" he ejaculated blankly. "What was the matter with it? I am sure it looked beautiful."

"You don't in the least know what it was," the girl said, half-scornfully; "a man never does. But the other women looked me up and down and found me wanting. A tumbled muslin—they knew, and I knew—whatever you did, my lord. And after all, it is quite a mistake that we women dress for men. In nine cases out of ten, we dress for the other women."

"I shouldn't care a bit what they knew, they would not look like you though Worth were to dress them." And then, as the girl laughed, he looked at her apologetically. "I suppose I shouldn't say things like that, or make compliments on such early acquaintance, should I? But you will forgive me, won't you? You see, after all, I am a Colonial, and not quite up to British etiquette."

"What do you mean by a Colonial?" she echoed, as they turned down the lane. "I understood



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you were a peer of the realm. I hope you aren't masquerading?"

"I am a peer, now. But I was a very remote cousin of the last earl's, and never expected to succeed; I was not brought up in the purple, that is why it doesn't seem to suit me somehow. My manners have not that 'repose which marks the caste of Vere de Vere'. I was working as a mining engineer, in Australia, with my old Uncle Ralph, when the news came that there had been five deaths in the family, and that I was the next heir. I came here to polish myself up a bit, but I think the professors find my ignorance almost too vast; they can't plumb its depths. This is my second year. But goodness knows when I'll take a degree! Neil Cameron coaches me. He's a good sort."

"You interest me very much. What a curious change in one's life—to wake up one morning and find one's self a Personage! I should love to be your kind of personage, with a right to sit in the House of Lords, and make my country's laws." Eve had stopped at the ruined chapel as usual, to look in, with her hand on the iron gate. "Yes, it must have been a delightful experience. And it was nice of you to come to the ancient University, and uphold Scots traditions. After all, why should everyone go to England for learning? You

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can do things here in Scotland too. It is only a kind of tradition on the other side of the Tweed, that you do them second-best."

"That's exactly what I said when Uncle Ralph wanted me to go to Cambridge or Oxford," he said, as if much delighted at this praise. "Uncle Ralph was my mother's brother, and doesn't think much of Scotland. He says he wants to make his fortune before he comes home. Poor old man! I don't believe he ever will come. He says he can't stand the dressing up. He never would dress properly, except on Sunday afternoons."

They parted at the door, where Davida was lighting the hall gas, and she watched them for a moment as they separated, the young earl lifting his cap on parting, with a genial—"How are you, Davida? Peace in the garden nowadays, eh? But we'll return—with the swallows!"

"That's the Earl of Cantyre; a pretty like earl!" she said crossly, as Eve paused beside her. "He's just a laddie, and a harum-scarum laddie at that. Burns, the bootmaker, thocht he was being cheated the first time he went in for a pair of boots. 'Whaur shall I send them?' says Burns. 'To Lord Cantyre, at the Hall', says the earl. 'Gae awa' wi' ye!' says Burns; and the earl gaed awa', laughing fit to burst hissel'. He's just a laddie!"



In the College Church

"There is no harm, Davida, there is no crime, I believe, in being young," Eve remarked, as the old woman concluded. "He's a nice boy, and quite unspoiled as yet. London and Belgravian mothers will do that, in due time, I have no doubt. But still, don't grudge him his youthfulness nowadays. It will mend. Comfort yourself with that reflection."

"Oh, I'll no grudge him anything," Davida said, and then she went off to the kitchen ruminating deeply.

"He was awfu' ta'en wi' her, I could see. There's a look in a lad's een that ye can never mistake; and there's no wonder, she's that awfu' bonny! But I dinna think that it would dae." She went on with her work, as if lost in thought, shaking her head every now and then as she took out her pastry-board.

"I've a kind of feeling as if there was trouble in the air. I like the lassie, and yet I have a sort o' a feeling that she's restless, and that's she's deep, and that she will bring trouble to this hoose. Yet hoo could that be? The Professor is safe wi' his chemicals, and Molly's safe wi' Mr. Cameron. She couldna' meddle wi' either o' them."

The recollection was comforting, or ought to have been, and yet as Davida rolled out her paste, and called to Bethia that it was time to bring in the

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potatoes, she returned again to her disturbing train of thought.

"They maybe would na' let him marry her, and it might get the Professor into mischief. It's queer—I've never seen it fail—trouble aye follows thae awfu' bonny folk. They're no safe to live wi'. Suner or later they're i' trouble, and ither folk wi' them. They're a sair fash to theirsels and to ither folk. I aye thankit Providence that I was plain. I wadna' hae minded being a weedy—ready-made, so to say. Other weemen couldna' hae cast it up till ye then that ye hadna' a man—and yet ye would hae been withoot the fash o' ane."

Davida paused then. Sandy, cap in hand, was passing through the kitchen, and paused with his usual provoking suavity to bid her "good-evening". "A rale coorse nicht, Davida. Eh, you weemen are comfortable i' yer warm kitchens! That laboratory fair freezes me and the Professor!"

"Aye, pit yersel first, my man!" Davida cried caustically. "I dinna care a bawbee for you, but if the Professor is cauld we'maun see about a new stove. As for you, I thocht ye had too muckle guid liquor to be cauld! Ye can ca' it 'methyated speerit' if you like!"

This was a home-thrust, and one not relished by the recipient. "Eh, Davida, my woman," he said, after a pause, "it's sad tae me tae hear a guid



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respectable woman, and a member o' the Establisht Kirk o' this land, hauding till errors that hae long been correckit—judging as ye be not judged" (Sandy was getting a little mixed). "Methylated speerit was i' that bottle, and sae I hae telt ye afore!"

"Maybel!" Davida said, and walked to the door, which she threw open. "This I ken, it tasted o' naething but guid Glenlivet! But maybe ye brew Glenlivet i' the laboratory—you and the Professor! For the noo, as I canna stand havering here wi' you—there's the door!"

Forret, shaking his head in sorrowful protest, walked slowly towards her. "The day'll come, Davida, when ye'll repent thae hard words—this awfu' injustice! For mysel, as the Professor kens the truth, I can let ye be! Weemen o' your sort is best let be! As the men thocht, Davida, i' your courtin' days. Peety me! Some puir lad has been saved an awfu' life wi' ye!"

The door banged then upon him, and Sandy chuckled wickedly. He had got one in! He did not, in faith, like the methylated-spirit story, but neither did Davida enjoy being twitted upon her single state. It was one of her few weaknesses, and had proved a weapon in Sandy's wicked hands before now.

"I dinna like that 'oman," he cogitated, as he

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pursued his way down the street, with his usual rather soft and careful step. "And I'd enjoy fine tae deal her a mischief. She's aye at the Professor and Miss Molly tae send me off. If ever I get my chance, Davida, look to yersel', my woman!"

And Sandy, scowling darkly, turned up his own close, and unfastened the door of his cheerless abode.



CHAPTER V

The First News of the Diamond

“Do you know, Molly, I heard for the first time to-day of your brother Bertie? I was quite ignorant of his existence when Davida mentioned him.”

“Have I never spoken of Bertie?” Molly looked up in great surprise. “I can’t think how that happened!”

The girls were seated on the green bents which fringe the magnificent reach of yellow sands stretching away to the west of the gray city. It was the afternoon of a bright October day, at the end of the month; so warm and bright, that it might almost have been summer, but for the suggestion of steel in the air as the afternoon waned gently to its close. The tide was far out, the water a dazzling sapphire, and a little white-sailed boat was tacking to and fro in a line with the ruined walls of the Castle. Eve had been pulling up sundry tough, pale-green grasses piercing their way through the sand, as Molly sat silent there, her eyes resting lovingly upon the city. Somehow her expression had changed a little, as she turned

"...and Bertie is, I expect, the black family," she said to herself, "though how anyone so mild as the old Prof could to have a black sheep in his family then she turned to Molly again. "him, Molly; Davida was rather uncom how did it come to pass that he should English university, to begin with?"

"My mother's people lived in Oxford said, "and Bertie has always been with them. I think he infinitely preferable thing English to Scots; he always says is dull. But he is to be here for Christmas will see him for yourself. I think you him. Bertie is very bright."

She seemed to gather her spirits together that. "Bertie is very popular at Oxford is sure to like you."

Eve laughed, lightly and carelessly. to think most people like me, Molly does is rather a mistake! Perhaps they do my better still."



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would tell you —" And then she broke off, and her face hardened; she had checked herself involuntarily. What had she been about to say? Whatever it was, it went no farther. It was one of those curious little breaks which occasionally checked her conversation. Molly used to feel that she was led thus far, and that then, suddenly, her companion would remember something, and a door was slammed in her face. There were surely many closed doors in this girl's life, young as she was; that was the strange thing! Fond as she was of Molly, there seemed so many doors through which no admittance was ever given her. And Molly had no secret chamber at all, or so she thought.

"What were you going to say, Eve?" she said timidly.

"Whatever it was, Molly, I am not going to say it now," the other concluded sharply, lifting a handful of sand and letting it drift idly through her fingers as she turned round towards the city. The light was fading fast; it was growing to look wondrous and ethereal, like a dream-city of dim mysterious towers, with a background of pale golden clouds. "You see, I want you to like me, Molly, and trust me. That means that I don't want you to know me thoroughly!" She gave a little curious cold laugh. "After all, there are so very few people, you know, who can afford to be known

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thoroughly. We are not all pellucid, like you, Molly dear; we are three people always—Wendell Holmes says so—the person we pretend to be, the person we think we are, and the real ego! I don't want to unveil my real ego, Molly, not even to these kind eyes."

"I don't like you to say things like that," Molly said, putting out her hand. "I don't like you to talk like that, as if you were always warning me against yourself, as if you were trying to prevent me from liking you."

"And if I am, Molly, if I am?"

There was a ring of sudden earnest in Eve's voice; somehow her face seemed a little pale and cold, and there was a ring of passion in her tone. Molly felt the small cold fingers quiver under hers, and then Eve drew them away altogether.

"Then it won't succeed!" was all Molly said, however, with a happy little laugh. "No, your efforts won't succeed, Eve. I love you, and that's enough. If you are three people, then I love all three!"

Her companion seemed to draw a sudden breath. She looked away resolutely at the towers; St. Rule's seemed surrounded now by a sea of molten gold, "a sea of glass mingled with fire"; her eyes rested on it, and the beauty of the scene crept to her heart with a kind of ache. Why could she not



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enjoy it more? Ah, why indeed! After all, why should she feel like this? She had counted the cost. She had taken certain risks; she had bought all this, with a price! But she had not reckoned on Molly's love, on Molly herself, on the loving depths of those clear blue eyes. Well, she was not going to be a fool! If the price were paid for certain things, she was enjoying them, and would look neither before nor behind. Had she not known all along, that if one is to be happy in this world one must look neither before nor behind? Had she not impressed the fact upon herself before now?

Molly was gazing half-wonderingly at her cousin, when they heard steps behind them, and then Cantyre bounded over the sandy bank and came up to them, taking off his cap, his face radiant. The *rencontre* was evidently a joyful one for him.

"I told Cameron it was you. I knew the little white wing in Miss Luttrell's hat. I had dragged Cameron out for a walk, and here he is. I say, isn't it a lovely sky?" He stood beside Eve as Molly went to meet her lover. "As good as the Riviera, I say. But we get the nasty easterly 'haars' and the nice St. Rule's east winds after Christmas."

"Don't talk of east winds and 'haars'. I never

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heard the word before to-day, but it sounds horrid!" Eve said. "You must learn to live in the present, Lord Cantyre, as I was telling my cousin just now."

"Oh, I'm jolly glad to live in the present!" the young man said lightly. "It's a very jolly present!" He laughed boyishly. "But I say, aren't you cold sitting there?"

"I'm ready to go now," she said, rising. "The light has gone from the towers; I was waiting till that faded." And then she walked on rather silently, feeling that she would have preferred to feast her eyes still upon the tawny orange light behind the gray-green bents, and the wonderful pale gold of the distant billowy sand, where the cold pale-blue line of water was flowing in with a kind of faint rippling plash, a serene monotonous sound, like a low chant in an unlighted church. Talkative, light-hearted Cantyre was not quite the companion she would have chosen, but it might be as well to let Cameron and Molly have their tête-à-tête; somehow of late he had seemed too busy to come much to the house.

So she walked on, Cantyre with a very beaming face.

"I have some news to tell you," he began. "You remember my telling you about my Uncle Ralph, the one in Australia?"



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"Yes," the girl said indifferently. "You said he hated to 'dress up'. Has he got over that? Is he coming home?"

"Oh no! he still says he couldn't stand this side. He's an awfully free-and-easy old boy—regular Bret Harte kind of miner, you know, but with a heart of gold!"

"And has he struck gold?" the girl asked, with a slight inflection of sarcasm. "Or is he content with the supply in his heart?"

"You are laughing at me," Cantyre said reproachfully. "No, he hasn't found gold, but the next thing to it. He has found a large diamond, the biggest diamond that has ever been found in Queensland yet. It is worth at least £5000, if not more. He is sending it home here, to me."

"What will you do with it?" Eve asked. Somehow the story did not excite her very much. "Wear it as a sort of breastplate in your shirt-front, or as a diamond pin? You would certainly be a magnificent spectacle, wouldn't you? St. Rule's would be electrified!"

Cantyre looked at her with a kind of puzzled reproach, though he tried to laugh. Why did she always seem to mock him?

"I never thought of anything like that. Besides, it isn't cut. That is what I am going to ask the Professor about. A friend of my uncle's, called

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Marsland, who was coming home, is bringing it right down here to St. Rule's. Uncle Ralph said," and Cantyre took a side glance at the beautiful but rather indifferent face beside him, "that it was his wedding gift to the Countess of Cantyre. Do you like diamonds, Miss Luttrell?"

He flushed crimson then, as if suddenly aware of the context. But if Eve saw, no slightest ray of colour tinged her face; there was no addition to the geranium tinge which the sea air had brought there. She only laughed coldly and mockingly.

"Do I like diamonds? No, I think I prefer my emerald set, or perhaps my strings of black pearls. I don't think diamonds suit red hair, Lord Cantyre."

"Red hair!" the young man gasped incoherently. "How can you say such a thing? You have the most beautiful hair in the world!"

"Have I indeed? Don't you know what Davida said to me? She said she 'never kent a woman yet wi' red hair that didna' bring trouble on a' connected wi' her'. That is a warning to you, Lord Cantyre, to avoid me. Judas is supposed to have had red hair, isn't he? And Mary Stuart, and sundry other troublous people."

He laughed.

"I shall tell Davida that I don't agree with her."



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It's an idiotic fallacy. But about the diamond. How would you have it set?"

"How should I possibly know? I don't know anything about diamonds," she said. "If I were you I should not have it here at all. I should have it placed in a bank in London. Suppose it was stolen here?"

"I don't think that is very likely. What an insult to poor little innocent St. Rule's!" There was a tinge of fixed annoyance in his tone, and a good deal of the brightness had left his face. "That is what Mrs. Langford said to me. 'Don't bring it to St. Rule's,' she said, 'or at least don't have it into this house.' To satisfy her, I said I would lodge the diamond at the bank after the Professor had seen it. I am sorry you don't seem to care about it at all—I mean to care to talk about it;" and he broke off rather lamely, watching her face. "I thought you would have been interested—that all ladies loved jewels."

"What a silly boy he is!" his companion was saying to herself as they walked along in silence. "He seems to have fallen in love with me, but I suppose a boy like this has a hundred passing fancies." And then a new thought came to her, and her face and eyes seemed to harden. "What would Uncle Geoff say?" The question was like a sting, and her eyes darkened more and more. It

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would be such an easy answer to the riddle of her life, if it was not quite impossible.

Cantyre chattered on, recovering his wonted sweet temper very shortly. He supposed it was only Miss Luttrell's "way"—this cool, indifferent manner—at least, it had always been her way with him. It did not at all offend him; after all, she was not one whose fancy was lightly won—he had no desire to win the love of a woman who was lightly won. And he had told himself long ago, yes, the very first night he had seen her in the distance at the Reception, with the purple velvet clematis in her hair, that this tall woman in the white gown, with the crown of ruddy hair, would be his wife, if he could win her. It was only now and then that a little uneasiness, a sting of doubt and pain, used to pierce him, and an uneasy question come to him. Was it always her way? Was she not different with the Professor, different with Molly? That didn't matter; but were there not some other people with whom she was otherwise—gentler, softer? There was Cameron. He had watched her listening to Cameron—

He had got thus far in his uneasy undercurrent of thought when Eve looked up at him and smiled. "I believe you are offended with me, Lord Cantyre, about this diamond," she said. "I really shall be wildly excited when I see it, and I sin-



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cerely hope no accident will happen to it. One hears of such romantic stories about diamonds, you know; somehow they are always a kind of bone of contention, the heart of a mystery."

"Oh, I am not a bit offended; please don't think so!" And then she was kinder and more careful, and they talked of other things till the couple behind came up with them.

When Molly joined them, slipping her hand under Eve's arm, they parted near the College, Cameron taking off the earl to a debate at which they were both to speak, and the girls walked home alone. Eve fancied Molly was a little quieter than usual, and she wondered why. Had Cameron been distraught? He had not spoken to her at all.

Molly had heard of the diamond too, it seemed.

"Lord Cantyre was very full of it," Eve said. "I told him he was not wise to bring it here. In novels and in story-books, big diamonds always mean mischief; they get lost, and everyone concerned is set by the ears. What a boy he is, Molly! These very good-natured people always bore me horribly. It is only shallow people who are so intensely good-natured. And he is like a babbling brook. But because he is the Earl of Cantyre, we all suffer him gladly."

Molly looked round in surprise. She could not

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understand the kind of fretful chafing in her cousin's voice. She thought Eve rather unjust.

"Do you know, I like him, Eve. He is so simple-minded and sincere. And as far as that goes, I have met stupid people who were not good-natured at all, and I do not think Cantyre stupid. Also, I think we need all the sweet tempers in the world. There are not so very many."

Eve laughed at that, as if vanquished, and she stooped and kissed the little face, before closing her own door. "Molly, you would speak good of the Evil One himself. It is quite true. Cantyre is quite a nice boy. I was only cross."

She sat down by the open window of her room then and looked out into the cool velvety darkness of the garden. "I am cross, because I can see more and more that if I liked to exert myself and did not snub him, I could—what? Make my curtsy at court as Countess of Cantyre? What a fool Uncle Geoff would call me—oh, what a fool! All the cards in my hand—even the diamonds!" She gave an odd laugh. "And I—positively refusing to play them out—positively shutting my eyes to the possibility of taking the trick!"

The sweet night air fanned her cheek softly. There was a breath of the sea and of rocks, and of wet brown sea-weed; over the house and the old archway to her right, rose, she knew, one solemn



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broken spire of the great cathedral. What had this place to do with “tricks”, with games of chance? Surely nothing!

And Uncle Geoff—thank Heaven!—was not here to mock her.

CHAPTER VI

Two Prodigals

The time had gone on, and it was some weeks before Christmas. The fine weather had left with October, and there had been wet, clinging sea mists, the shrieking wind and the bitter cold which had been foretold. Yet the weather somehow did not seem to affect Eve, and she was much more out of doors than Molly, who had a rather delicate chest. Molly used to marvel sometimes at her friend's love of the open air, her joy in the wild cliffs, deserted now, and her apparent love of solitude. "I am not one of those people who find my own society at all tedious," the American girl had said to her cousin one day, when she was preparing to walk as usual to the cliffs. "You see, I find it quite unnecessary to think of myself in St. Rule's, there is so much else to think of. There is all St. Rule's and its past. I don't find myself at all interesting to myself, Molly; do you?"

Molly had gone back to her seat by the drawing-room fire; there was a promise of snow in the air,



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and heavy clouds were hanging thick above the old garden, where the last rustling leaves had fallen from the great elderberry-tree.

"I am sure it will be much more comfortable here than out on the cliffs to-day," she said, smiling, and then took up her book, just as Davida entered, and Eve retired.

"I have brought a letter, Miss Molly, and that should ha' been gien ye this morning," she said. "I think it's from Master Bertie."

She brought the missive up to the girl, and Molly took it quickly, a swift shadow darkening her face. Davida waited a moment, looking rather anxiously at her charge. "I'll hear if there's ony news aifter," she remarked in rather a soft and anxious voice as she shut the door. Davida was quite aware, and very irately aware, that Bertie's letters usually threw a shadow on his sister's face.

"He hasn't written for some time," Molly was saying to herself. "But I dare say there is nothing wrong; I am very foolish to imagine that there should be."

The letter was written in a sprawling hand, upon very superfine paper, with a good deal of crest and address. Master Bertie was a very luxurious young man, particular as to his stationery, and as to a great many other things.

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"My dear Molly," the letter ran, "I know it is ages since I wrote, but I have been fearfully busy and worried." [Molly's cheeks coloured rather nervously at this somewhat ominous preamble; Master Bertie's "worries" usually meant a burden for someone else, to press rather more heavily than did his own.] "The truth is, Molly, I have got into a bit of a mess, a horrid mess in fact, and you are the only person I can confide in. For you must manage the governor, and get him somehow to give you the money without breathing a word as to why I want it. You know I told you all along that I couldn't possibly live on what the governor allows me; no fellow could. All the fellows here say they cannot think how I get on as I do. But I don't get on, and of late the tradesmen have been bothering me abominably. How can a fellow work, with people for ever pestering him about bills? And then I thought I'd make everything right, and win a pot of money at Carter's rooms—Carter is the rich American, you know, whose father made a fortune with a patent lemonade—'Carter's Fiz' they call it—but I didn't, I lost £200!" [The letter fell into Molly's lap at this point, and she gave a terrified gasp.] "And that isn't the worst, Molly. I went along to Thorpe's, Reggie Thorpe's; we had both been taking rather more than was



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good for us, and that's a fact, and he said he was in as much of a mess as I was, only he had his father's cheque-book with him—took it out of his pater's drawer—and he was going to try and write a cheque for what he needed. You know how I can imitate any handwriting I see, and how I used to take the governor in with bogus letters from Germany about new chemicals; so just for fun I said I'd write them, one for him and one for myself. He had heaps of his father's signatures for us to copy. After I'd done them, they were so good that we thought we'd try if they could be cashed. And they were! We both of us came to our senses when we got the money; and Thorpe's in an awful blue funk. But as we had the money we settled with our creditors. We have had one slice of luck, for his father has just started for the States, and the thing won't come out till he gets back. Then it will. So, Molly, I must have the money. Do you understand? I must. You must get it from the governor, by hook or by crook; but for any sake don't tell him the truth, or you will upset him horribly. I have no time for more; we are getting up a comic opera, and I must go to rehearsal to Martindale's. I expect to be home, of course, before the Christmas week. Love to Father, and my respects to Davida. Is she

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as sour as ever? Tell her to lay in a good stock of mince-pies."

Alarmed and troubled as she was, there was a flash of indignation in Molly's gentle eyes as she read the last words, and she did not for a moment notice the postscript over the page: "I am really awfully worried about this biz, so you will do what you can for me, old girl, won't you? You see it's pressing."

Was he hopeless? Was he mad? He, who could tell her this story, this shameful, disgraceful story, and yet jest about mince-pies!

She sat quite silent for a long time, forgetting where she was, forgetting to light the gas, forgetting that Bethia had not brought tea. Her mind was groping in shadows, a deadly weight, a sickening fear, was at her heart. What was she to do? A sword of Damocles was above their heads, was above the old house—above the white head out there in the laboratory, where the Professor was working happily and ignorantly. Ah! how could Bertie, how could he?

All along Molly had borne the burden of the family cares, though she had borne them so happily and bravely that no one had ranked them as cares at all. She had shielded her father from every worry, she managed all his money affairs, and knew exactly how they stood; in all Bertie's



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scrapes she had come to his aid with unfailing tact and courage, wonderful in a girl of her years. But this was a situation beyond her powers. It was quite impossible that anything approaching the sum he required could be given him; though the household was not by any means extravagant, it was run on comfortable lines, and a good deal of money went to Bertie at Oxford, and upon laboratory expenses. The Professor was always buying new apparatus, new minerals, new microscopes, new books. This year his expenses had been unusually heavy, and Molly had thought only last month that even her slender dress allowance would have to be curtailed. And yet, if the money were not somehow obtained, disgrace would descend upon them all!

"It would kill my father," Molly said to herself, wringing her hands together. "He would never hold up his head again. And yet, what can I do? I have no one to whom I can turn."

She could not tell Cameron; how could she? It would be dreadful to betray her brother, and in any case her lover was powerless to help her. He was quite a poor man now, whatever he might be in the future. She had no other relations except her mother's brother in Oxford, and he, she knew, was badly off.

It was quite dark at last when Bethia brought

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the lights, with an excuse, and Molly rose almost dizzily, putting her hand to her head.

"Have you taken my father his tea, Bethia?"

"Davida said I was, please, to ask you to go and bring him in, as he'd eaten very little lunch," the maid said; and Molly opened the French window of the drawing-room and passed out into the garden and on to the laboratory. Sandy was very busy polishing a beaker with a clean soft duster, breathing on it, and then carefully holding it up to the light; that was what he was doing when Molly came in, albeit, unknown to the Professor, he had been seated on a bench behind the old man, reading a newspaper under cover, before the door opened. Molly went up to her father and put her hand on his arm, too much preoccupied even to notice the bottle-washer.

"I want you to come in to tea, Daddy, before it is too late," she said; and the Professor for once went obediently, turning round first to bid Sandy watch that the thermometer did not rise above a certain degree in the course of the somewhat delicate experiment in which he was engaged.

"I'll mind, sir; I'll never move my eyes off it," Forret said obediently. "Tak' your time to your tea. A cup of tea is rale cheerin' and refreshing aifter the day's work, as I was just thinking. But tea is no' for the like o' me."



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These words were addressed very meekly and sweetly to Molly, but the girl was too lost in troubled and tragic thought to pay any heed to them, and Sandy could only glance rather sourly after them both. She had her hand under her father's arm, and they were walking through the garden now, where the keen wind lifted the white hair from his forehead.

"I believe it is rather cold, Molly," the old man said. "Are you sure it is quite wise of you, darling, to come out without a hat?"

And then they passed up the stone steps, and entered the drawing-room, where Bethia had lit the standard lamp. Eve came in a little later, and threw off her hat, kneeling down to warm her chilled fingers by the fire. She noticed at once that something was wrong with Molly, and she watched her carefully, though covertly—the strained tense eyes, the compressed lips, the want of colour in the small fine face. She said nothing, however, covering Molly's unusual silence by her own gay talk, and Professor Luttrell noticed nothing at all. He stayed an unusual time, and was only roused by the clock chiming six from the mantelshelf. He had been more tired than he knew, and the fire-lit room, with its fresh scent of violets, was oddly comfortable.

"Need you go back before dinner, Father?" Molly

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said, starting from a deep reverie, when he rose at last. "Don't go again."

But the old man hurried out of the window as if recollecting something, and the two girls were left alone. He had stayed, indeed, much longer than he intended; the experiment was delicate, and Sandy not always to be trusted.

"Molly, what has happened? Can't you tell me?" Eve said, going up to her cousin then. "No, don't say it is nothing. Your face, my dear, is 'a book in which men may read strange matters'. I would not ask, Molly, if I did not think that perhaps I might be able to help you."

"Oh, if you only could!" the words came with a kind of wail. Molly was holding with one hand on to the low mantel-shelf. "But you can't, Eve, and I dare not tell you!"

"It is not your own trouble, then? It is connected with someone else?"

A ray of relief seemed to pass across her face as she spoke, and a long breath escaped as she turned aside for a moment. "I am glad of that, though sometimes other people's troubles, I know, are infinitely worse to bear than one's own. Trouble is usually connected, in one way or another, with money." She smiled bitterly. "Is yours, Molly? Can't you tell me that?"

"Yes, I think so," the other said hesitatingly. "I



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think I may allow that, Eve. But, oh! You won't breathe it to anyone? Not to my father?"

Eve laughed. "My dear child, I should as soon think of telling one of your dear little innocent canaries upstairs. No one ever bothered the Professor with money troubles, surely. He is like the lilies of the field—though, of course, he toils very hard in his own line. I mean that no one would ever trouble him with the question of ways and means. Now, if you were to tell me—I have had a wonderful experience of money troubles in my life, Molly, and I used to be rather quick-witted in that way, though I haven't a penny myself. My poor Molly, I am a hopeless pauper. Still, I might hit upon someone else who could help you."

The other shook her head. "I couldn't tell you yet, Eve,—if I ever can," she said, in her strangely troubled and altered voice. "Don't you think there are certain dark bits in the road we have to travel alone?"

She slipped out of the room then, and Eve stood for a little in silence by the fire. "I am glad it is no trouble of her own," she said to herself. "It must be something connected with the brother. From Davida's sniffs, and a few caustic remarks she let drop, I could see that he was a black sheep—and of course black sheep have a talent for laying their troubles upon other people. My similes are

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getting hopelessly mixed, I see; I had better go upstairs and get my things off. I dare say she will tell me all soon, unless it is something very bad. And your picture, young man, doesn't look, somehow, as if you had brains enough to do anything very bad. You are handsome, but, I should say, feeble."

She looked rather sarcastically at a framed photograph of a handsome but rather weak face upon the mantel-piece, and then ran upstairs.

The Professor had gone through the garden, reproaching himself bitterly for his delay in returning to work. Still, if Sandy had been faithful, everything might be satisfactory. The question just was—and the old man brushed aside a trailing rose-branch rather impatiently as he thought—"Had Sandy been faithful?"

He had been a little suspicious that day; there was a certain bottle labelled "Concentrated Sulphuric Acid" which he had inadvertently knocked out of Sandy's coat-pocket after the bottle-washer's return from lunch, when he leant over to reach something from the bench, and this had somehow lingered in his mind rather unpleasantly. Sandy had lied glibly upon the matter; but when Sandy was very glib, the Professor was always a trifle uneasy. What did Forret want with "Concentrated Sulphuric Acid" in his pocket? There had been



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a smell, too—surely there had been an odour he knew—it was not sulphuric acid! He entered the laboratory with these suspicions strong in his mind, and they were not dispelled by the scene which met his eyes. Sandy had stood faithfully enough, with his eyes steadily fixed upon the thermometer, for the space of about five minutes after the Professor's departure; but the occupation by that time seemed to produce a kind of mesmeric effect upon him, for he had gradually slipped down upon the bench, there to imbibe some of the "Concentrated Sulphuric Acid"—apparently of an innocent type—and he was now sleeping peacefully, while the mercury of the thermometer, left to its own devices, stood nearly at its own boiling-point—a result greeted by the Professor, when his hasty steps made him aware of it, with tears of mortification. He called sharply to the old bottle-washer, so loudly indeed that Forret rose, staring blankly about him. He was not now entirely sober, even the Professor could see, but Sandy was always more guileless than usual when in this condition.

"The thermometer, Sandy! The thermometer!"

"I see, sir, I see! Thae new thermometers is no' to be depended on! Yet I canna think hoo it was, for I kent a' that depended on that experiment! It's a mystery to me, a dense mystery! I found myself here in a kind o' dwalm (stupor)! Somethin' had

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ta'en effect on me! Noo, what wad you say, Professor, if it was the fumes o' that new anaesthetic you are trying for? That's the sole explanation I can think o'!"

His light-gray eyes, blinking slyly, were resting on the Professor's with awful solemnity, but the old man was provoked into striking his hand sharply upon the bench, a most unwonted exhibition of temper, and one which would have rejoiced Davida's heart.

"You can go, Sandy!" he said sternly; "and you need not return till I send for you! Consider yourself dismissed!"

There was a pause of consternation upon the man's part, but he knew that it was wiser at present to obey at once. So, shaking his head mournfully, he buttoned his ragged coat, and took his greasy hat from under the bench.



CHAPTER VII

Bertie's Confession

It was the week before Christmas, a clear frosty night, with bright moonlight. The students had not yet left for the holidays, but the streets were very quiet, as Bertie Luttrell, walking up from the station, saw a bright light pouring down from an unblinded window in a house opposite the College Church.

"I believe that's Cameron's window," he said to himself as he stopped and looked up. "I've a good mind to look in on him; Molly said she and the governor and the new cousin would be out at dinner. I can be back by ten. I expect the solemn festivities here are over by about that time."

A remarkably handsome young man, this brother of Molly's, with fair curling hair thrown back from his white forehead, and large innocent blue eyes. "Such a nice bright boy, and so handsome!" his lady friends in Oxford had decided long ago; and as Master Bertie was gifted with an exquisite tenor voice, and carolled as easily

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and light-heartedly as a bird, his services at musical parties were always in request. Something in the atmosphere of the still old town to-night, something in the shadowy edifice of St. Salvator's Chapel opposite, with its broken empty niches, its stately tower, and the great black squares of its stained windows, seemed to sober him now. There were memories in this "haunted town" even for light-hearted Bertie, it seemed, though he pushed them off, with almost a peevish gesture, as he went up and rang Cameron's bell.

"Upon my word, there's something in the very air of the place that gives me the blues!" he was thinking crossly. "Suppose Molly can't manage about the money—?" But at this point the door was opened by the maid, who answered that Mr. Cameron was at home, and Bertie was shown up to the sitting-room, where a bright fire was blazing, and where Cameron himself had just risen from the book-strewn table at which Cantyre was still seated.

"Oh, it's you, Luttrell! I didn't know you were expected till to-morrow," he said pleasantly. "I believe your father and the others are dining in the country. Have you had dinner, or can I get you something? I suppose you came from London to-day?"

"Yes, but I dined in Edinburgh, thank you,"



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Bertie said carelessly. "I don't run any risks about my dinner, old fellow, as you remember." He looked then rather curiously at Cantyre, and Cameron introduced them.

"I suppose you two have been wrestling with mathematics, or some such joy," Bertie cried carelessly, seating himself. "Yes, I'll take a cigarette, thank you. How goes the old place? It's a 'Sleepy Hollow', isn't it? By Jove, I couldn't stand it for more than a week or two!"

"I'm very fond of St. Rule's," Cantyre said. He was thinking of Miss Luttrell's enthusiasm as he spoke. "We manage to make things hum, don't we, Cameron?"

"I'm sure Cameron doesn't," his future brother-in-law said rather scoffingly. "At least, he used to be an awful grind. How are all the profs.? Has my governor been blowing himself up lately?"

"No, I don't think so," Cameron smiled, pushing the matches towards his friend. "He seems to work generally in his private laboratory nowadays, and I think Davida keeps a keen eye on the lights. She is as good as a policeman."

"Oh, she's still to the fore, is she? By the by, what is this girl like, the new arrival? Molly wrote that she was 'lovely'—girls do gush so! A fellow I met in Oxford lately, a friend of her father's, who was down here at the Reception in

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October, laughed at that when I told him. He assured me Miss Molly must have been joking. I feel rather curious to see her. I'm a great judge of a pretty girl."

"I don't think your friend can have had eyes in his head," Cantyre put in then, indignantly. "Of course she is beautiful! It isn't mere prettiness, is it, Cameron? There are a hundred pretty girls—there are a good few even in St. Rule's—but she is different. She has the kind of face one reads of, but never sees—that is how it strikes me. She is a kind of goddess."

"Oh, I say, that's coming it strong, isn't it? But it's odd, for the man—Home was his name—quite laughed when I repeated Molly's words. He said she had sandy hair."

"Sandy hair!" ejaculated Cantyre indignantly, and he looked so belligerent that Cameron put out his hand half-smilingly.

"You know, old fellow, no two of us see beauty alike, do we? And, after all, Luttrell can judge for himself."

Cantyre, however, seemed really to have lost his usually sweet temper, and, after a little, announcing that he had better be going, Cameron showed him downstairs, where he relieved his feelings by a scornful gesture towards the unseen new-comer.



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"I don't much fancy that young cub," he said. "What airs he gives himself! Is that Oxonian? And how elegant he is! Quite a tailor's advertisement."

"Bertie is not a bad fellow at heart, though he puts on a great deal of side," Cameron said pacifically. "I fancy he saw that he riled you, and put it on. He can sing like a bird; wait till we get him at the Gaudeamus."

"Oh, I don't want to hear him," the other growled. "Sandy hair indeed!" At which Cameron laughed, and then shut the door upon his friend, standing still for a moment in the hall, with a shadow on his grave face, before he went upstairs.

"What a hot-headed young fool! Gives himself airs, I suppose, because of his title," Bertie began, lounging before the fire with his cigarette. "They are not used to titles in St. Rule's, so I suppose he gets a lot of worship. After all, why should his back be up about this girl? Is he sweet on her?"

"I have never enquired." Cameron was putting away the books, his back towards the speaker; then, as Bertie began to pace the room restlessly, he took the arm-chair and lit his pipe. "I say, Cameron," Bertie burst out suddenly, "does Molly tell you everything?"

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"Cameron raised his eyebrows. "That depends upon what you mean by 'everything'."

"Oh, do drop that detestable Scots habit of never answering a direct question!" the other cried querulously. "You know perfectly well what I mean, Neil. Does she tell you all her secrets?"

Cameron probably was not prepared to lay before this boy's eyes the relationship between himself and Molly, and his manner was a little stiff and cold as he replied: "I don't know that Molly has any secrets, Bertie; if they were her own, I dare say she would tell me. If anyone else were connected, then I know she most certainly would not."

"Then she has told you nothing about me?"

"Nothing except that you were coming home."

"Has she seemed a bit bothered about anything?"

Cameron put down his pipe for a moment, and looked up. "Yes, I think she has," he said. "Has she been bothered about you?"

Bertie looked away from the direct eyes; he flung away his cigarette and took another, as if scarcely knowing what he did.

"The truth is, that I'm in an awful mess, Cameron," he began, "a regular hole. It has worried me so frightfully, you can't think."



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"I dare say it has worried Molly a great deal more," Cameron said unsympathetically. "I know you, young man. Hadn't you better tell me all about it? I don't care to have Molly worried."

He had always known Bertie; occasionally had kept him in order during his summers at St. Rule's, when the young man's escapades got rather beyond bounds. He thought he was going to hear of another mild scrape now.

"I suppose it is money as usual; and I don't know how I can be the least help to you about that—in fact, I know I can't. Still, if it will relieve you to tell me—"

"Of course I knew you'd preach," the other said sulkily; "you always did preach at me. But I feel I must tell someone, and of course you are a long-headed chap, and will keep it to yourself."

Cameron received this rather dubious compliment with a slight smile. He was not very apprehensive as to what the boy was about to tell him. He supposed it was a matter of the usual small bills, the tailor and the various other tradesmen; Bertie was an adept at running up bills, even for confectionery and stationery. But when the young man presently laid the entire story before him, his whole manner changed, and he started to his feet. Bertie had never seen him so moved.

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"You don't mean to say that this is true! That you were such an utter imbecile!" burst from him indignantly. "You are joking — no, you don't look very like joking, and it would have been an insane jest."

"Joking indeed!" Bertie threw back his fair head upon the rather unyielding arm-chair. "I wish I were! I tell you, Cameron, I lost three hours' sleep last night thinking of this! I'm almost off my feed, I really am!"

"I'm glad to hear it," was all the comfort he received to this tragic statement. "I expect your sister has lost a good many more than a few hours' sleep since you told her this pretty story. Good God, boy! Are you aware of what you have done? Are you aware that this means prison? Means shame and disgrace to your father and sister?"

"It won't come to that!" Bertie cried angrily. "You needn't try to scare me like that! The money must be found somehow! It can be raised; I can go to the Jews if the worst comes to the worst. And Thorpe would never let his father prosecute me publicly!"

"The Jews would want security. I would not tie a millstone round my neck to add to my other difficulties," Cameron said sternly; "and Thorpe can't answer for his father. You must be got out



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of this, certainly; the question is, how? I wish I knew!"

"Yes, that's just it!"

Cameron thought a little, looking stern and fierce.

"How about those relations of yours at Oxford?"

"Oh, they're no good! Five fashionable daughters don't leave a man much cash to spare. The thing would be to get the money out of my father."

"I don't believe that it is possible to do so," his companion replied coldly. "You could not cripple the Professor, even if you can tell him. A thing like this would break his heart, and you know it would. It is quite impossible to tell him. Besides, I do not believe he could give you a sum like that."

"It will kill me!" Bertie wailed, tragically, then. "I tell you it's on my mind, night and day!"

Even this statement, however, was received in rather chilling silence. Cameron was thinking deeply, his pipe forgotten, his eyes bent straight before him, his strong kindly lips set.

He was quite aware that by to-morrow morning Bertie would have been able to throw off his burden, that in all probability he would be the gayest of the gay at the Gaudeamus. He was not at all concerned about Herbert Luttrell. Could

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that mercurial youth have been obliged to pay the entire penalty of his sins in prison I do not think Cameron's appetite would have been affected. Bertie was utterly selfish, and selfish people do not as a rule arouse very deep affection in others. But it was the dark sulphurous cloud which he could now see gathering over the Professor and over Molly! The old man had a spirit of the keenest, most sensitive honour hidden beneath all his gentleness, and there was much pride in his nature, as Cameron knew. This story would be like a thunder-clap! He had never even known of Bertie's various escapades. Cameron had managed to hush them up in St. Rule's, and Molly had paid the Oxford bills. This would be an overwhelming disgrace—a staggering, if not a fatal blow. Of that he was sure.

“Well, can't you think of anything?”

“Not to-night, I am afraid, Bertie,” Neil said, speaking more gently. After all, the boy was young, and there was a look that reminded him of Molly in the handsome, delicately-coloured face thrown back upon the chair. “I shall try to think of something, and I will call and see you to-morrow afternoon. The fellows want you at the Gaudeamus in the evening. I was to be sure and bring you. It won't do to let your father see that anything is wrong. Remember that.”



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"No, of course not. You are such a clever chap, Cameron; you're sure to think of something."

Bertie rose with an air of much relief. "I'll be off now, as I expect they'll be back from the dinner, and I'm quite eager to see Cantyre's 'goddess'. Oh yes! I'll turn up at the Gaudeamus; I've got a pile of new songs from the last comic opera."

Cameron's face had darkened again as he heard all this. How easily the boy could throw things off! Was he utterly callous, utterly shallow?

On the hall table when they went down he saw a letter addressed to himself, and he took it up, after he had bidden Luttrell good-night, though he stood for a moment looking after the boyish figure as Bertie walked away.

"He thinks he has shifted the matter on to my shoulders," he cogitated, looking at the solemn tower opposite, its severe lines sharply outlined in the moonlight. "And he is quite content! And yet, what on earth can I do? I don't even see a ray of light in the matter. If I can do anything, I will—for Molly's sake!

He sighed again, and there was a look of care and of pain in his face as he went upstairs. More than ever, in these days, he would have wanted to do anything, to suffer anything, to make any

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sacrifice, for Molly! Had he not felt dumbly as if he owed her some reparation, for something of which she herself—of which all the world—was ignorant?

He broke open the envelope when he reached his room, and glanced down the letter indifferently, but as he did so his expression changed, and his thin cheek flushed.

"This seems too wonderful to be true! Can it be true?"

He read the epistle through again, and then stood as if transfixed, his hand on his forehead. "What shall I do?" he said. "What would be best to do?"



CHAPTER VIII

A Ghost in the Castle

Eve was returning by the Castle gate next afternoon, having left Bertie and his sister together, and she stood now, hesitating a moment before she turned in. The old ruin looked very cold and bleak to-day, a gaunt shell of bare walls and yawning windows, with the sea rolling up in great sullen waves underneath, and dashing a fringe of heavy white surf on the jagged rocks. A long moaning swell surged up from below, and seemed to meet her as she entered. The girl crossed the moat and walked across the grass towards the well of the garrison, which stands in the centre. There was no one about. The time of the tripper and the tourist was past; they would return, with the flowers of spring, and the day was not tempting enough for any St. Rule's citizen to care to wander here.

Eve was looking down the well, where great hart's-tongue ferns grew almost up to the coping; far below she could see the glimmering black depths of water. The old custodian, almost bent double with age, and with a coat which seemed

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to have gathered some of the mildew of the ages upon it, looked at her indifferently as he passed, clanking heavy keys, but he took not the slightest notice of Eve's little nod. He seemed a relic of another age, like the building itself. She knew him of old; she had been to the Sea-tower yonder under his guidance—a strange and grim dungeon commonly called the “Bottle Dungeon”.

“I feel as if he were a bit of the ‘Bottle Dungeon’ himself,” Eve had said to Molly. “He is doubtless a harmless old Scot, but he looks as if he were a relic of the bad old past too, and might have clanked to and fro to the Sea-tower with the prisoners’ mouldy bread and muddy water for ages past—as if he would be here for ever! I wonder if he has seen the Cardinal’s ghost—the red reflection of poor Wishart’s death-fire!”

She had asked the old man the question, but he had shaken his head dourly, as if only half comprehending.

“I never heard o’ ony Cardinal’s ghost.”

“Workmen have seen him in the gloaming,” Eve informed him. “One of them told me,—a dim figure in a crimson robe, rushing frantically over yonder towards the postern gate, with outstretched hands and a ghastly leaden face! The murderous voices were behind him—they meant death—and he was to find the gate locked, and to know him-



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self caught like a rat in a trap! Poor old ghost, he cannot rest in his grave!"

She wandered over the ruins, her mind full of the past. She had the place to herself, and she could fill it with bygone shadows. "Only the sea is the same," she said to herself, looking out with her back to the moat and the ruined walls. "I dare say it roared here, dully, just like this, on many a bygone day; and they heard it in yonder horrible dungeon, and perhaps it lulled them to sleep, and they forgot the horrors of the prison and dreamed they were out again in the sunshine, free and happy!" And then she turned round and took her hands from the iron bars which protected the ruined windows, hearing a step on the gravel behind her.

A shabby elderly man was standing in the path, and he lifted his hat smilingly, as Eve's face whitened under the recognition, holding out a carefully-gloved hand. "My dear Evelyn! My dear niece, delighted to meet you again! I was looking in at yonder gate and caught sight of you. There could not be two figures such as that in St. Rule's, I said to myself with natural pride. You are like your dear mother, and like the Bouveries. You have the Bouverie poise of neck and shoulders too, and the Bouverie grace. And how is my charming girl?"

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There was dead silence for a few moments; his hearer's face had changed; there was a cold repulsion over it as he spoke, and her lips were set and her eyes bright.

"Come now," he said, still jocularly, "are we not going to shake hands? I have come all the way from London, my dear, to see you. And this is rather a cold welcome, isn't it?"

She turned then, and re-seated herself on the edge of the window, clasping her hands on her knees, and looking at him steadily.

"May I ask why you came, Uncle Geoff?" At which abrupt query he laughed, waving his hands.

"Straight to the point, as usual. But, my dear girl, we never ask to know the names of the cards in our antagonist's hand, do we?"

"Then you own you are an antagonist?"

"Simply because you insist on treating me as one. I, who am all that is kind and friendly." He sat down on the window-seat next to hers, and began to poke at the gravel with his stick, his tone changing. "You have not treated me well, Evelyn, and you know it. Why did you leave me to learn from Mrs. Govan of your whereabouts?"

"You had no need to know my whereabouts," she said stonily. "When I refused to obey you, and to take the lofty position you procured for me in the back row of the chorus at the Gaiety, you



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bade me a theatrical farewell; I believe you kindly added that I might 'starve alone'. I suppose you thought that I would starve, that I was a sinking ship! And—certain things—do not like sinking ships!"

"I might have known you better, my dear," he said, "than to think you would starve. And really, the little trick you played seems to have turned out very well. You are looking in most excellent health; your colour is superb."

"Thank you, Uncle Geoff! you can spare me your compliments," she said. "How did you find out from Mrs. Govan where I was?"

"Very easily. I went to the dear innocent old lady, saying that I wanted to send you a cheque, but had lost your address. She rose to the bait at once, and it was quite simple for me to put two and two together. You forget, perhaps, that I was present at the interview in Craven Street, when the young American lady told you how hard it was that she was not allowed to go to Egypt with her friends, but had to bury herself in Scotland for a year! I took in all the details about the crusty old American trustee who insisted—I understood when, later on, you and she stood whispering in the hall, and she was trying to persuade you to do something; when, later on still, you went to the docks to see her off for Marseilles, and she gave you a great

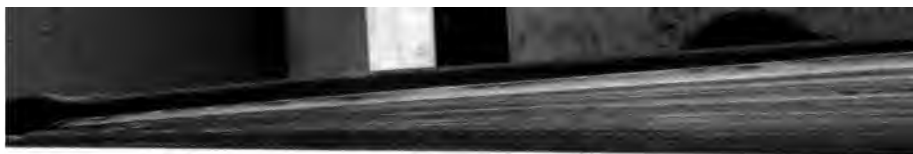
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many final instructions; I saw the plot, my dear, in one flash! Later, you disappeared—to Charing Cross. The only link I lost was your address, and Mrs. Govan, as I have said, supplied that."

"Yes, I see. I was rather foolish, I suppose, to think I could keep you in the dark, Uncle Geoff." She spoke listlessly and scornfully. "All the same, I really fail to see why you should follow me here. What good can it do you?"

He smiled at that, rubbing his hands. "Perhaps we shall come to that by and by. In the meantime, may I incidentally enquire how the little scheme has worked? Is it agreeable in these parts? You wanted a little rest and change, free of cost; has it turned out all right? And have they taken you, as it were, on trust?"

"Yes, everything was very simple," Eve said. "They asked no questions at all; they had never seen any portrait of Eve Luttrell, there had been no intercourse between the two families for long years. The real Eve sends me letters from Egypt, which I post to the trustee in New York; I tell her what to say, and she chronicles my small beer in due course. Why should all this interest you, Uncle Geoff, considering that I cannot be of the slightest use to you? My purse is as empty as ever, I have barely a few shillings in the world, and I have no prospect of filling it. You never



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liked empty purses, I know; you never cared to know people whose crime it was to possess them. Why should you continue to know me?"

"To know you!" he echoed grandiloquently. "My own niece, on whom I have never turned my back; my own niece, whom I protected for years, whom I clothed and fed and educated!"

She laughed at that, lightly and mockingly. "In return for your usual *quid pro quo*, Uncle Geoff; please don't forget that! I should like to know who marketed and cooked for you in Paris and Vienna? Who kept your clothes neat, even as a child, when your poor wife died? Who bore blows and hard words, in return for a little scanty food? By and by, who played for you, in the untidy little salon, where you cajoled the poor young men into losing money to you, till you were known as a scamp in every capital in Europe? Ah, you don't like these reminiscences! And when my voice failed, and there was apparently no hope of my making a success in concert or opera, who left me in fury and dudgeon, vowing that I was a useless incubus? I really would not trouble to play the benevolent heavy father to one who has been so entirely behind the scenes!" She began carefully to fasten her gloves, looking away from his angry face to the leaden waters below.

"It is utterly useless for you to come here. I

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can do nothing for you, absolutely nothing. My host is an old man who is buried in scientific research, and lives up to every penny of his small income. I am robbing them only of my board and lodging. I like them; I would not rob them of a halfpenny more."

"Rob them! She talks, how she talks, this girl!" he cried then, apostrophizing the gray walls opposite. "As if I would ask her to do anything of the kind! I have come here, my dear Eve, upon a little matter of business. It depends upon you whether you mean to help me with it, and, incidentally I may say, to help yourself also, or whether we shall part as strangers."

Eve was listening intently, an alert watchfulness in her clear hazel eyes as she turned them upon him. "Business!" she echoed slowly. "Business with you, Uncle Geoff, always meant one thing. I need not tell you what that was. Now, there is nothing of the kind possible in St. Rule's. This university city is like a poor relation, very poor and very proud. You can't rob poor relations; you can't take certain necessary garments from the Highlander. The society here is not at all rich or fashionable. There are a few retired Anglo-Indians, I fancy, who keep any money they may have in their pockets; people who would not know you, or touch you with a ten-foot pole. There are



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university dons, very stately and learned and dignified, to whom you would be as impossible as a Hottentot or a Red Indian! No, I really don't see what you mean, or where your 'business' would come in!"

"Perhaps not, or so you say. But what about the young aristocrats at the new Hall? What about a certain jewel which is to arrive here shortly—an uncut diamond of great value? Eh, what of that?"

The girl's face whitened slowly, and she drew a sharp breath. So he had found this out, and he had come here for the diamond.

"You would never be so mad as to think of that?" she said, almost under her breath. "You would be detected at once, and the stone would be found. It would be traced at once."

"Yes, of course; I am so clumsy, I have so few brains!" he said suavely. "I should manage the whole affair so clumsily. Do you remember the story you overheard in Amsterdam, of the diamond which Van Delden had cut up, and which the police, the clumsy English police, are trying to trace still? I had a letter from Van Delden only yesterday, and he was telling me about this very Australian diamond. It is christened 'the Cantyre diamond', and is to be handed over to its owner shortly. Later, so the *St. Rule's Gazette* tells me,

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it is to be taken for Professor Luttrell's views as to the re-cutting. He is an expert on stones, it seems. I really smiled when I read that, my dear." He took a copy of the paper from his pocket, and smoothed it out slowly on his knee. "I bought this to-day in the town. The scheme seemed so simple and so practical, with a little help from my dear Eve—with a little help from you. Listen! 'Lord Cantyre, who is to spend the Christmas week with Professor Luttrell, is, we understand, to consult Dr. Luttrell as to the re-cutting of the gem.' Which means that the diamond will be under the same roof with you, Eve! You will ascertain easily where it is to be put, and, as the advertiser says, I shall do the rest! Later—all safe and satisfactory, we shall know how to divide profits."

"You shall not have any help from me at all," she said slowly. "Instead, I shall warn the Professor if necessary. I don't intend that you shall touch this stone. I don't intend to be dragged down into any of your nefarious schemes. I have washed my hands for ever of you, and of the past! I always hated you, as you know. I kept my hands clean in spite of you, and I shall do so to the end. I don't know how you so miscalculated—how you so misjudged me—how you dared to lay this scheme before me!"



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They had both risen, for the custodian had come out from one of the cellars at the right of the entrance, where he had been dozing on a damp seat by the wall; and he was now clanking his keys heavily, calling out to them something in a very broad Scots accent, which neither heard. They understood, however, that he meant them to go.

"What a fearful old ghoul! I suppose he means us to leave," Uncle Geoff said deliberately. "A pity to interrupt your heroics, but perhaps we can walk together a little way."

"We shall part at the gate."

"Just as you will, of course. We can meet again at any place you like. Your hands clean, my dear Eve! What a delightfully poetical simile! But what about this little white scheme of yours? This little tissue of spotless lies. Suppose that I call on the worthy Professor, and upon his charming daughter, and give them a peep—just a peep—behind the scenes? You have created quite a little sensation, I hear, in this ancient and aristocratic city. My landlady was full of 'the beautiful young American lady, cousin of Miss Molly Luttrell', to whom Miss Molly Luttrell was devoted! It would be such a pity, would it not, to prick the bubble? And when St. Rule's suits you so well too, and thinks so highly of you!

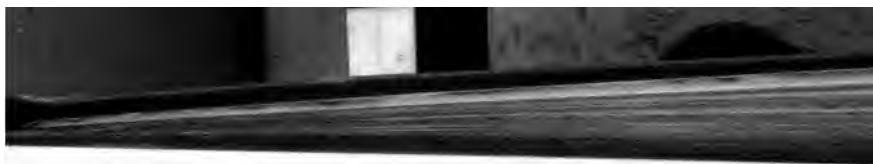
A Mystery of St. Rule's

You are really looking handsomer than I have ever seen you before. I give you my word that you are looking amazingly handsome! It would be such a pity to return to poverty and a stuffy London lodging!"

They had walked across the damp grass then. Eve's steps had a kind of leaden heaviness; the sea seemed to murmur sullenly in her ear as she left it behind—it had a low sinister sound. She had forgotten the pageant she had pictured in the old banqueting-hall; she had forgotten the ghostly figure of the great Cardinal rushing in awful terror to the postern door. All the poetry and the romance and the tragedy of the past were as nothing to her now. Her own sordid tragedy, in the shape of Uncle Geoff, was enough for her. He had brought back all the old life.

"I don't think you will call at the Professor's, or tell any story, just yet," she said as they reached the gate. "We can each think over what we have said, and I dare say we can come to a sort of armed neutrality. It will not further you at all to betray me, as you know. For the present, I can bid you good-bye. Your scheme is a mad one. That is all I say. It is dangerous, and you don't like danger."

She left him standing at the gate gazing after her with a furtive smile, but she did not look



A Ghost in the Castle

round, only walked on rapidly towards the Cathedral; and then, after shrugging his shoulders, her companion turned towards the town, and he too was soon lost in the growing darkness.

But Eve felt as if she could not face Molly—as if she could not go home yet.

“She will ask me if I have seen the ghost,” she said to herself, standing at the great iron gate of the Cathedral, and looking down the wide paths towards the graves lying under the dark towers. “I might reply that I have seen my ghost indeed!” She laughed suddenly and bitterly. “I suppose I was a fool to think I could get rid of Uncle Geoff. He is like an Old Man of the Sea. He is my Old Man of the Sea, and I can’t throw him off. But this idea of his is horrible—it is insane—and he must be outwitted. I shall have to scheme and plot, and tell more lies! Somehow, since I came here I have so grown to hate lies! When I tell one it comes between us, between Molly and the dear old man and me, like a gray cloud, and I grow restless and miserable, and Molly and I seem to stand on opposite sides of a gulf which I cannot cross. To think of beginning it all again. Oh, it is hateful! It makes me feel tired, and old, and weary. It makes me wish I were lying there with those poor dead people! Nothing chafes them now, nothing worries and troubles

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them; tragedy is past for them, with sin, and with the pain and disillusion and the fret and fever of life! I am not old, but yet I don't know,—I think I should like to be lying there, under those quiet gray towers. They can never be tempted again. Tempted to hold out hands to love. Oh, Molly dear, to hold out hands to love!"

And then she pulled herself together with a jerk. She was in a bad mood; Uncle Geoff had a bad effect upon her, a depressing effect. After all, she was young and strong, and her brains were at least of an average cleverness. She was in the Professor's house too, and Uncle Geoff was out of it, and dared not enter. He had never, so far as she knew, essayed any scheme so dangerous as this. She must go home and think. Uncle Geoff must be outwitted—he must be prevented from betraying her.

"No, I don't mean to be cheated of my peaceful year, or of Molly's love yet," she said to herself, turning away. "I bought the year, and I mean to have it. Molly must not know me yet, no, not yet!"



CHAPTER IX

Exit Uncle Geoff

The gay tripping notes of the last fashionable waltz were rippling through the drawing-room as Molly entered next afternoon, just before dusk, and Bertie rose from the piano-stool with an impatient exclamation when he saw her.

"Well, I'm thankful to see someone at last! I never did know such a sleepy household! The governor is always shut up in that beastly smelly lab., and I don't know where you girls hide yourselves. Look here, Molly. Don't people ever give entertainments in St. Rule's?"

"Yes, of course they do, Bertie. There are a good many dances coming on," his sister answered, though without much spirit. She was taking off her gloves by the fire.

"But we ourselves. Can't we give something? Can't you get up a little play, or have a big kettle-drum and some music? Cantyre is to be here, he told me, and he's a rattling sort of fellow. He would help."

"Would you really like that?" Molly said, feel-

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ing a kind of dumb wonder. "I think we could have the kettle-drum, Bertie; I don't know about the theatricals." She hesitated a little, looking at him with a kind of puzzled pain. "I didn't think that you would care for anything of the kind just now."

"No; I suppose you expect me to sit in sack-cloth and ashes!" he cried, peevishly and angrily. "That's like a girl. As for you, Molly, you haven't the courage of a mouse! I'm bound to get out of this business somehow—I always do. I always have before. You know that perfectly well."

He looked at her indignantly, as if he would force her agreement.

"Oh yes! I try to think, to hope, that you will, Bertie. But I don't see any ray of light; I wish I could!" Molly said then, almost passionately. "Somehow I cannot bear to look at Father, or to think of this. He is so innocent and unsuspecting, and it always seems to me as if a sword were suspended over him. Why don't you go down to the laboratory this afternoon and see if you can help him? He has sent Sandy away just now, and the other man he got was so careless! It would pass the time," Molly concluded rather deprecatingly. "And it would please him very much."

"Yes, I dare say it would, Molly, but it wouldn't



Exit Uncle Geoff

please me. And these are my holidays!" He was quite aggrieved. "A fellow doesn't want to study hard for three months, wear himself to skin and bone, and then go and bury himself in a place where every evil odour that one can imagine seems going off at one time. I don't wonder the governor's experiments never seem to come to anything," Bertie concluded, throwing little pieces of coal on the fire, as if to relieve his feelings. "They're a deal too smelly!"

"Bertie, he was saying only yesterday that he hoped you would eventually go in for science."

The young man laughed at that uproariously and light-heartedly, as if he had not a care in the world. The idea really amused him immensely.

"Yes, I'd like to see myself. I really should like to see myself. I should as soon think of going in for steeple-chasing, or for sweeping chimneys, or for applying for the hangman's post. But I tell you, Molly, what I do think I'll go in for, and I mean to tell the governor too, after next term. I'm going in for singing. A fellow I know says I could easily get a post in one of the comic operas to-morrow. His voice isn't a patch on mine, and he earns ten guineas a week. Good tenors are rare, and mine is wonderfully high. I can tell you a story about my high C—"

"Oh, Bertie, not now!" Molly rose almost

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feverishly from her low seat. "I can think of nothing but that cheque. I had the most awful dreams last night. The story haunts me night and day. I thought you were in prison, Bertie, and then the scene changed to the court at Cupar. And my father was there, so old and bent and shaken." She wrung her hands together suddenly. "I would do anything—anything in the wide world, I think—to save him from hearing what you have done. And every day the knowledge comes nearer."

"I wish you'd stop talking such rot!" was all the rejoinder she obtained; and Bertie walked over to the piano again, and began to play savagely and riotously. "I never saw such a Job's comforter."

"Who is a Job's comforter? Not Molly, I'm sure!"

Eve had entered the room, a basket and a pair of scissors in one hand, and she stood looking half-smilingly at them, as Bertie swung round on the stool.

"I'm awfully glad to see you!" he said. "I wish to goodness you'd come here and stop Molly. She's always in the blues, and it's getting infectious. You said you'd like me to sing that new tenor solo. Shall I? I believe you sing yourself. You ought to, with that throat." The young man looked at her critically. "Shall I sing it?"




Exit Uncle Geoff

"I should love to hear—after dinner," Eve said diplomatically but firmly, as she went to the French window and turned the hasp. "At present I want to go to the rockeries at the foot of the garden to get some sprays of ivy. Molly has promised to let me arrange the table to-night. The Principal is coming, you know, and two of the professors, as also, of course, the professorial better halves."

"Yes, that's like the governor—having a lot of old fogies!" the boy grumbled. "They're certain to talk shop, and of all shop the University brand is the worst. But it's too dark for you to see, and the grass is horribly wet." He had risen, and hesitated for a moment, looking from his own elegant patent leather shoes to Eve's well-shod feet. He admired her very much, and would have admired her more if she had given him the slightest encouragement, but the grass really was damp, and Bertie was very careful of himself.

"Don't come with me!" she said, laughing lightly. "I want to choose my sprays carefully, and I know you would stand shivering on the gravel. Also, you would hurry me."

"Oh, very well, of course, if you don't want me!" He went back half-huffily to the piano. The girls in Oxford did not treat him in this half-cavalier style, and Bertie did not quite enjoy it.



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"That's a very foolish young man, and he has evidently got into mischief," Eve said to herself, as she went down the long gravel path, past the thick privet hedge to the end of the garden.

There were great clumps of ivy growing over old roots of trees in the grass near the house, but Eve liked the small, clinging variety, which tangled tough branches over the rockeries beside the elderberry-tree near the boundary wall of the garden. Over, on the other side, there was a very large enclosure, known as the "Provost's Garden". In bygone days it had belonged to a certain energetic chief magistrate of the city, who had exercised a somewhat facile imagination in its adornment. There were Chinese pagodas, little artificial streams, many rustic bridges, a weeping Niobe and a broken-armed Hebe, a water-wheel, a decayed summer-house, and various wooden monuments, with long printed lists of those battles in which Great Britain had been conspicuously successful. Now, however, the pagodas were falling to pieces, the streams were getting choked up, the little bridges were broken, the statues were chipped and weather-spotted, and very few visitors ever came to see, or to refresh their memory with the dates of England's conquests. The "Provost's Garden" had deteriorated into a market-garden—base uses which would have cut its progenitor to the heart.



Exit Uncle Geoff

Eve was bending over the rockeries, cutting her sprays carefully, and gathering here and there a tawny leaf, touched late by autumn's crimson finger. The dusk had fallen, and the whole place was in deep shadow, when she heard a voice just above her head, which startled her into dropping both scissors and basket.

"Eve!"

It was Uncle Geoff's voice, coming apparently from the clouds, and as Uncle Geoff had not been wont to appear in the form of an angel visitant, Eve brought her eyes at last to the level of the top of the wall, where he was calmly resting his elbows. He greeted her with his usual deliberate smile.

"Sorry to give you a start, my dear. I wandered in here to see the famous garden. My landlady was talking about it this morning, and then a man I met, and had asked about that smoke over yonder, told me it came from Professor Luttrell's laboratory, and that he lived just over the wall. Perceiving a convenient ladder, I thought I should take a little nearer look at the garden and the house. A fine old garden, I should say, and a fine old house. And then, to my great surprise, my eyes alighted upon a certain tall young damsel, with a bare head of most beautiful hair—we may call it auburn, perhaps, and be poetical."

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"I don't in the least mind what you call it, Uncle Geoff," Eve said. "But I think you had better retire from that wall. It is not usually considered polite to look over into a private garden without leave."

"Not when it is to speak to my own niece—my own sister's child!" Uncle Geoff was lighting a cigar, apparently unmoved by this chilling remark. "Besides, I have a piece of news for you. I am going away, Eve. You were right; this is too risky and too big a business altogether. I recognize that."

Eve looked up at him as he spoke, suddenly alert.

"Your reception of me, too, I may say," Uncle Geoff continued sadly, taking out his cigar and examining the red end, "has hurt and grieved me more than I can express. It was most unnatural, most unfilial, considering the relationship in which we have stood to each other. I don't wish to reproach you, but it isn't what I have deserved, Eve, and therefore I am leaving. I am going to Dundee."

"What are you going to do in Dundee? That is rather an odd place for you to go to."

She was putting the sprays in mathematical order in her basket, as if thinking deeply, and her eyes were strained as she listened for the reply.



Exit Uncle Geoff

When Uncle Geoff was angry and noisy, Eve was never disturbed; when he was suave or pathetic she knew that there was something dangerous, something beyond her ken.

"I had a letter," he answered then, "from Merton. He has got up a new company, 'The Merton Tragedy Tour', and he is playing Shakespeare's tragedies in the provinces. I saw he was billed at Dundee, so I wrote there last week and asked if he couldn't take me on. You were penniless, you said, and could not help me. And though I hate the provinces, the pot must be filled somehow. It is a sad fact that a man is obliged to eat."

"And he has taken you on?"

"I am to join, Eve, and play small parts—soldiers, and banner-bearers, and messengers, and citizens. How like my luck! I always detested Shakespeare's messengers, and his citizens are appallingly prosy. It is unworthy of me, and I think Merton might have done more for an old friend. But I suppose there is nothing more to be said. I am used, in these days—" Uncle Geoff waved an arm theatrically, till the perilous wobbling of the ladder reminded him of the insecurity of his post. "I am getting hardened to ingratitude."

"It is a good thing," the girl said calmly, "to

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get hardened to anything. I often wish I were hardened, all over, with a cast-iron heart and a cast-iron conscience. Then I should get through life with an excellent digestion, and with much happiness. Well, good-bye, Uncle Geoff; I can't stay now. I hope you will like Dundee, and get better parts by and by. You used to act well." She looked at him, half-bitterly, half-smilingly. "Your manager might do worse than intrust you with the villain of the piece now and then. I suppose the villains are what are deemed good playing parts."

Eve's tongue apparently ran away with her at times, and though Uncle Geoff laughed and shook his hand at her, in a mixture of paternal blessing and reproof, before he descended, his face darkened as he stood on the other side, and he remained for a moment silent, dusting his hands.

"That was a nasty one. She has a tongue like a razor! But I shall get one in for that, in due time, 'Miss Luttrell', though I don't see much use in playing any of my cards against you just now. I shall keep them till occasion offers; it is never of any use to be impatient."

He walked away slowly through the garden, returning to his lodgings near the dark old Abbey Walk, the high wall, with its empty niches, seeming to frown upon him as he went.



Exit Uncle Geoff

"So far that was quite satisfactory, for she took everything in, and will of course picture me in Dundee to-morrow. According to Mrs. Maclaren, Lord Cantyre is to take the diamond when he goes to the Professor's. It is really a most delightful coincidence that Mrs. Maclaren should be the washerwoman at the house, for she evidently hears all the family news. And as I shall have left for Dundee when it is brought to the house, I can't possibly have anything to do with its loss should anything happen. There is a risk, I allow, and I don't like these night businesses, but if I am successful, and manage somehow to learn where it is to be put, it ought to be simple after all. Van Delden assured me that once the diamond was in his hands it would never be heard of again. And it was a splendid sum down. Once Mrs. Maclaren ascertains where it is to be put, the rest will be quite easy."

He sat thinking deeply in a very tiny little sitting-room, which looked out on a long line of cliffs, and upon the cold wintry sea, and he was still sitting in the dark when the landlady brought in his tea and a few letters. He was generally inclined for gossip, and they chatted a little as usual.

Eve had meanwhile walked back to the house, the little basket over her arm, and she went

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straight to the dining-room, where she began her work of adorning the table.

"What a mercy that he is going, and that he sees himself that it would have been madness!" she was thinking. "He must have heard something—he must have had some help that I don't know of. The whole thing sounded so wild and formless. But he has given it up, so that does not matter now."

The table was set, and the ivy most artistically arranged, when she suddenly stopped and looked towards some newspapers in a rack at the side of the room.

"He was very smooth and polite, and said nothing angry at all. And when Uncle Geoff is rebuffed or checkmated, he is always so extremely nasty. Somehow I don't quite like this. What has happened to make him go? It is not only my refusing to help him; he would do what he had to do without me."

She considered again, and then took up a newspaper.

"This is the *Dundee Advertiser*. It ought to have the theatres. Is Merton in Dundee?" She turned to a corner of the paper and read it carefully. "'Theatre Royal, Dundee. The Merton Tragedy Tour.'"

Yes, so far that was quite satisfactory. And yet



Exit Uncle Geoff

Uncle Geoff was very deep—he would know she would look. Was he going to Dundee?

“I was foolish not to find out where he lived; I could have gone and enquired,” she said to herself. “I don’t even know the name he passes by, and Uncle Geoff’s aliases are so many and so varied. I wonder if he thinks I believe him! I can’t make up my mind yet, whether I do or not—I think I do! It sounded such an impossible plan. He does not know where the diamond would be put. Yes, I think it is ‘Exit Uncle Geoff’. Thank Heaven!”

Bertie was still playing in the drawing-room. He was really musical, and he had wandered into one of Schumann’s beautiful half-bitter, half-sweet reveries. Eve’s face clouded as she listened; the restless feverish music seemed somehow the echo of her own heart. There was a wailing melody that came over and over like the phrase in a fugue.

“It is quite true,” she said to herself. “I wish I had a cast-iron heart and a cast-iron conscience! Then I should be happy here, and I should not care whether Uncle Geoff stayed or went. After all, what is the diamond to me? I am struggling against myself all the time. This place, Molly, and her father torment me. They make me want to be honest, crystal-clear, like themselves—kind and true. I, who am a sham and a deceit! If

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they knew '*mon naturel*', as poor Queen Mary said. Yes, if they knew '*mon naturel*'!"

The music stopped with a crashing discord as Davida sent Bethia to sound the dressing-gong, and Bertie came out in a temper, vowing she did it to annoy him.



CHAPTER X

In the Provost's Garden

"The pater's hospitality always breaks out in the wrong direction, that's what I say!"

Molly looked up from her work rather wonderingly.

She had hoped that her father's invitation to Lord Cantyre for part of the Christmas holidays would have pleased her brother, and kept him amused, but there was never any knowing how Bertie would take things. He was a decidedly unexpected young man, and he was taking this, as usual, in an unexpected way.

"I thought you would have enjoyed having him here," Molly said; "Daddy thought so. And then he wanted to consult Father about cutting the diamond. It seems that his uncle had found a diamond-cutter in Melbourne, but that it has been very badly done there."

"Oh, bother him and his diamond! I am sick of hearing of them!" Bertie growled. "People here can talk of nothing else, and he's such a rattling addlepate too. A pretty kind of noble-

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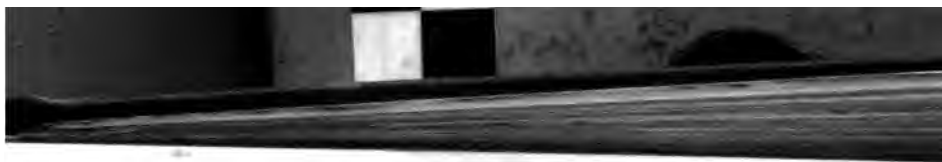
man! What's the use of a jewel like that to him? I'd have it cut up and sold pretty quick. It's too bad to bring it here, I say, putting temptation in a fellow's way." And then he laughed suddenly and uproariously, as Molly looked at him in a kind of scared silence. "I say, Molly, you are an awful softy! When is he coming?"

"To-morrow afternoon, I think, Bertie. But I wish you would not say things like that."

"I wish you wouldn't sit like a death's-head at a feast," was the rude rejoinder. And then he strode into the hall, where he could hear Davida's voice upraised in solemn denunciation from the upper landing: "Wickedness never gangs lang unpunished; it aye brings its ain reward! And as sure as my name's Davida Forrester, you will come to your reward, Bethia!"

"Who's that you're pitching into, Davida?" called the young man from the foot of the stairs. "I say, it's a pity you weren't a parson. You'd shine in the denunciatory line, wouldn't you?"

Davida descended the stairs slowly, some fine linen over her arm; she could never resist retailing Bethia's misdemeanours, even to so unsympathetic a listener as Bertie. "I left Bethia yesterday to mak' Lord Cantyre's room ready," she said, standing before him solemnly. "I had laid out these sheets—they were your mother's, Master



In the Provost's Garden

Bertie; they're as soft as silk—and when I gaed upstairs she'd pit on cotton anes I had laid by for her and me—”

“Oh, bother the sheets!” he cried, turning away from her impatiently. “What a fuss you all make about him! Cotton sheets won't kill him!”

He almost ran against Eve then, as she was coming downstairs with her things on.

“You shouldn't stop Davida in the midst of her recitals, Bertie,” she said. “Don't you know what a pure joy it is to dwell upon other people's peccadilloes? I really think it only comes next to the delight some people find in retailing their own good deeds. And Bethia, of course, poor Bethia! is a hopeless sinner; but so kind and obliging, Davida!” and she patted the stiff shoulder next to hers. “And with such a merry laugh; it is a delight to listen to it! After all, people who can laugh like that deserve a great deal from the world, it is so infectious!”

“Aye, but we dinna gang thro' this world laughing,” Davida said sourly. “Nor does it help us wi' oor daily wark, that I ken o'. But I maun be off noo, for I've some messages up the toon I can trust to naebody but mysel'; though really I'm whiles feared to leave the hoose in Bethia's charge. She'd open the door to a' the beggars in the place.”

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"Yes, and when so many burglars and suspicious characters are about," Bertie said tauntingly. "They might make off with some of the pater's collection. A chunk of feldspar under one arm, and a rock-crystal under the other. By Jove! it would be a good riddance! I wish you'd let in a few burglars, Davida, with a fancy for minerals."

"Ye're an awfu' haverell!" was all the reply he got, however, as Davida walked away to put on her bonnet and cloak.

It was early dark, and the day had been dull and lowering, with a fine clear mist creeping like a pall of silver over the sea. Just before the broken wall of the chapel, at the end farthest from the entrance, there was a narrow path which led to the confessional and the vestry, and before this end there was a huge lime-tree, upraising its bare and gaunt arms now in the gloaming. A shabby figure had been lurking behind this wall for some time, when Eve came out of the house, and, calling something cheerfully to Molly, made her way past the chapel.

"Number one!" Uncle Geoff chuckled, rubbing his hands together. "That's number one gone. Now, if Fate would only favour me and send out number two—that old she-dragon of a house-keeper." And then, even as he spoke, Fate favoured



In the Provost's Garden

him indeed, and Davida, with a basket over her arm, came out of the back-door, and was soon speeding up the lane.

"Luck is certainly on my side to-day. I was never so aided by Fate before," Uncle Geoff said to himself. "The cards are positively flung into my hands. First of all, there was that *rencontre* in the Abbey Walk, when I met the Professor and Cantyre, and kept behind them all the way. 'You must take the diamond to the bank, my young friend,' says the Professor. 'Davida says she won't have anything so valuable in the house.' 'Oh, nonsense! we'll lock it up in one of the drawers of that stupendous cabinet of yours in the library,' says the earl. Now who speaks of luck! It really looks"—and he began to creep softly past the chapel—"as if Fate were positively impelling me to this! And they're all such slow coaches here. I shall have the diamond safely, and have left the country, while they are all shaking their heads and exclaiming over the loss. There's no one so slow as your slow Scot. A man could be off while they're getting the thing into their heads."

It was about half an hour later when Bethia, sitting in the kitchen in delightful and unwonted idleness, was roused by the bell, and went to answer the door.

A Mystery of St. Rule's

"I'm the glazier from Maclean's; I'm come to put in that broken pane in the upper half of the library door," a man's voice said. "If you'll just show me the way, I'll step in and do it."

"Davida didn't say anything to me about it," the girl said, slightly surprised; "but I suppose she forgot, for she was in a great hurry. Will you just step this way, please?"

"Is Professor Luttrell in the library?"

"No, he is not. He is always in the laboratory in the afternoons," Bethia said; and then she conducted the man through the drawing-room and into the library, which opened from it by two shallow steps.

The library had a certain fame of its own, for here George Buchanan was said to have taught the heir to the Scottish throne in many bygone days. Now it was surrounded by large cabinets of beautiful minerals, and the Professor's writing-desk stood in the centre, laden with a chaos of papers which Davida had been dared to touch, and which she referred to as one of the means to "bring doon her hair wi' sorrow to the grave". Bethia saw then that the lowest glass pane of the door leading into the garden was indeed badly cracked across, so, merely remarking that he seemed to have everything there that he wanted, she left the man to his own devices. Davida did not hurry when



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she did go "up the toon", and that was Bethia's rare opportunity.

When the door was shut upon him, the man opened his bag and set to work with great rapidity.

It was not, however, the cracked pane which exercised his ingenuity, for he did not attempt to remove it; he was working with a screw-driver at the lock, which he neatly removed and then replaced, so that apparently nothing was wrong. Then he opened the door, and tried it from the outside; it opened with a slight push, and the lock fell upon the thick mat. This result seemed quite satisfactory, for he rubbed his hands together for a moment, and then neatly replaced things as they had been. His next movement was to the largest cabinet, which had a number of drawers, and here he bent down and examined the locks very closely and carefully.

"Quite simple! I can manage it all right, thank you, Professor!" he said to himself, then returned to the door, where he carefully dusted away any sign of his work, and finally walked through the drawing-room and back to the kitchen, meeting Bethia coming out with a tray.

"Well, you haven't been long," she said.

"Fact is, I hadn't a large enough pane. Don't you say anything about it, there's a good girl,

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or you'll get me into a row; I'll come back to-morrow with the right size." And then he opened the door and was gone, Bethia going on to the pantry. She did not think much of the matter. She was going out to a party that night, and her thoughts were bent on her dress.

She quite forgot, indeed, to mention the matter of the glazier's visit to Davida when that worthy returned; the scolding she had had that morning rankled, besides, and Davida, who was late, was too engrossed to enquire if any one had been there. Fate favoured the false workman all through.

Uncle Geoff had made his way slowly down the old cobble-paved street which led to the Provost's Garden, and, watching carefully, he now slid through the gate and made his way up the neglected path to the old summer-house, which stood against the wall at the extreme end of the garden, tucked into a corner. It was very dark in the garden, and quite deserted. The market-gardener, who grew fruit and flowers at the other end, was at tea with his wife, and though people were quite free to come in to purchase fruit and flowers, and to wander by the broken and rather lean-to pagoda, and over the ruined little bridges and the water-wheel, very few visitors ever troubled the Provost's Garden now. The owner talked,



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indeed, of sweeping away the whole thing and selling the ground. The garden's "day" was done; it was a relic of the past, sunk into disreputable decay.

There was something very deserted to-day in the air of the whole place; something dreary and depressing. The statues and dancing figures were dirty and chipped, wet and mournful; there were long lines of dead sodden leaves by the high box-wood edging of the paths, a few rotting pears still hung on the leafless branches, and the dead and blackened stalks of dahlias and sunflowers littered the plots. Uncle Geoff stood and regarded the broken and creaking pagoda for a little before he turned away with a shrug. What a piece of antiquated folly, he thought, it had all been!

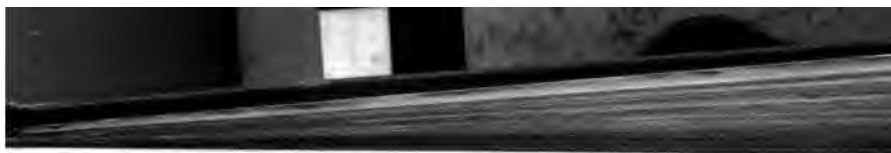
Inside the old summer-house, however, it was at all events dry, and he looked round with some satisfaction.

"Not at all a bad place, and one that comes in most handily," he said to himself. "I am safely in Dundee, as my landlady knows, and as my dear niece knows! I shall sleep here for to-night and to-morrow night, and I shall be gone, catching the train at the junction the next morning. Let me see now;" and he began to count on his fingers. "There are just so many chances of danger, so many things which may happen. I

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may as well tick them off. Number 1: the girl may mention the glazier's visit, and the old she-dragon might find the broken lock, which would be mended properly, and when I get over the wall to-morrow night, I shall find it securely locked and the household on guard. That would be fatal, so far as my getting the diamond goes, but it would show me that they were on the watch, and I should throw up the game and retire. That is risk number 1. Risk number 2: I may be seen before then, and suspected afterwards, and watched, but I really think that is a very slight chance. Risk number 3: Eve certainly had her suspicions, and did not quite take in the Dundee story. Query: How will she act when she hears of the diamond's loss? But I think—I think she will hold her tongue. She does not wish me to peach upon her. No, I think she would keep quiet."

He had an old carpet-bag pushed away in a dark corner under the seat, hidden behind some loose planks. He took this out now, and began to regale himself with some bread and cheese and beer. Finally, as the darkness fell, he took a prowling round the wet and dripping paths, saw that a certain ladder was all right by the wall which separated the Provost's from the Professor's garden, and finally returned to the summer-house. He had seen one of the under-gardeners shut a greenhouse door, and



In the Provost's Garden

then go off through the public gate, locking it after him. So far all was safe. Through the little latticed windows of the gardener's house a shaft of bright light shone through the ivy leaves which covered it, and the ivy was rustling in the cold wind on the old Abbey walls, and over the roof of the dilapidated summer-house. He shivered for a moment as he groped within, and then he took a candle from his bag and stuck it between two pieces of wood on the rustic table. He had a newspaper in his bag also, and he sat down after this, and began to read with the greatest composure, having pulled to the rather crazy door. Uncle Geoff prepared to pass the night with as much comfort as was possible. He was consoling himself with the reflection that on many occasions he had been a great deal more uncomfortable; and that, after all, the big stake he was playing for was worth a little discomfort. There was an old rug behind the carpet-bag. He would roll himself up in that presently, and the summer-house was at least water-tight.

Over the wall and the dark expanse of garden there was a dimly-lit window where Eve was dressing herself by the aid of the wax-candles in her quaint old mirror, the blind undrawn. They were to have a dinner-party next night, and the dress she had made for it, and which she had just finished, lay on

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the bed now. It was fashioned from a piece of silk which Molly had given her.

"I never had such a becoming frock before," she said to herself, "and I know I shall look well in it. I want to look well, and yet why should I? Cantyre will pay me compliments; he always does, and I don't care a straw, alas! for poor Cantyre's compliments. The other man will give one quick glance, and then look away. I know his expression—I know the colour of his eyes, that curious deep slate-gray. I know how he will look! His eyes always go back to Molly, with that swift flash of pain, with that instantaneous remorse, and Molly will notice nothing. She does not see that he—dares not look at me! She is so happy, and so innocent and unsuspecting. There is no jealousy in Molly's nature, there is no guile at all. Hers is a nature which it ought to be impossible for anyone to deceive. What would she think if she knew the truth? The truth as to his love for her, and the truth about me? But after all, nothing dreadful or tragic is going to happen. Men make these mistakes every day, and so do women. The wrong men are married to the wrong women all the world over. They make a hideous mistake that is irrevocable; but because it is irrevocable they hide it bravely, and grow gray and cross and tired early—that is all! Uncle Geoff would say that after a few



In the Provost's Garden

months it does not matter at all; but, then, Uncle Geoff is not a man whose opinions upon life or upon love are worth quoting."

Her mind had reverted to her uncle, and she stood before the glass idly, looking through the darkness to where the black edge of the garden wall cut her line of sight.

"Thank Heaven he gave up his insane scheme! I think he must have been mad. It was like the scheme of a wild detective romance, and the air of St. Rule's is not appropriate to that. One wants London, and the footlights—the pages of penny novelettes. Well, thank Heaven, he is in Dundee, holding a banner, or lunging with a wooden sword!"

It was odd how she dwelt upon his departure; as if she wanted to convince herself, and keep down a certain uneasy presentiment. And then she blew out the candles as the gong sounded through the house, and went downstairs.

CHAPTER XI

Cameron's Disloyalty

Eve went to the Cathedral early in the afternoon of the day following. Lord Cantyre was to come at tea-time, bringing with him the great diamond, which was to arrive in St. Rule's with his uncle's friend, by the forenoon train. Molly said later that a kind of presentiment of evil had seemed to hang over her all the forenoon, but Eve had gone out immediately after lunch. "There is nothing like fresh air," she said to herself, "for dispelling imaginary troubles. And, after all, the worst of my present trouble is imaginary. I am not going to believe in it until it becomes real, if it ever does. Uncle Geoff is away, and so I shall believe."

She was very fond of going to the Cathedral ruins, and she wandered in to-day, almost instinctively. The velvety grass was bathed in sunshine, and there was a white flash of wings above the great Square Tower, where the pigeons were flying up to the blue sky. Just over the wall and the Gate of Our Lady, there flashed the sapphire line of the sea;




Cameron's Disloyalty

one or two brown-sailed fishing-boats were drifting out into the dazzling, shimmering distance. The place was almost deserted save for a few chubby-faced babies with their nurses, but it was very bright and peaceful to-day. Even the many headstones, the little marble crosses, and the old-fashioned "table" gravestones with their faded lettering, by the cloisters, could scarcely bring to the mind any thought of the dead who rested here. Eve sat down where the High Altar had stood—in the palmy days of the Cathedral there had been a hundred altars—choosing for her seat a great flat stone, which is laid above three immense stone coffins. She knew the history of St. Rule's now almost by heart, and her mind drifted peacefully away from her own troubles as she sat looking down towards the great stone gateway.

Down that long aisle four hundred clergy had come to offer prayer and praise on the arrival of the Papal Bull which inaugurated the University; here, in solemn thanksgiving after Bannockburn, had come the stern-faced Bruce, with his glittering retinue of soldiers and knights and nobles, fresh from that great and gallant victory—proud Scots, every one of them!

"Everything was different then," Eve said to herself; "everything except the sea, I suppose, and that soothing murmur where the waves are breaking



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at the foot of the cliffs. If these people could look back now, and see this great ruined shell—the home of the dead, the home of those who have done with sinning and sorrowing, and with all care for ever—what would they think? Gone, the altars, the coloured windows, and the saints in their niches—nothing left of all but crumbling stones! How little it makes life seem, and all that we strive and break our hearts over! After all, what is life but the fret of one day—one brief day? So much happiness, so much grieving, so much sinning, so much remembering—and then the candle is blown out!”

She looked up then, to see a tall man coming down the path towards her. It was Neil Cameron, and he carried in his hand a little wreath made of ivy and white narcissus. He was striding along, as if lost in thought, but he looked up and started violently when he saw Eve's red skirt, and there was a curiously set smile upon his face as he advanced. A stranger might have fancied the meeting did not please him.

“I startled you, Mr. Cameron,” Eve said, though not with her usual readiness. “I have been sitting here, picturing all the pageants of the past, as you know I am fond of doing. I love the Cathedral. But of all the ruins in ruined St. Rule's it is the saddest.”



Cameron's Disloyalty

"Yes, there have been a great many pageants here," he said, and looked about him with a long breath. "I have wondered sometimes that there is not more echo of the past around these walls. Do you know, some people say there is a great crypt beneath our feet, with all the church's treasure hidden in it. To-day it is bright and beautiful; but you are right, it is a place of memories."

They stood in silence for a little then. Eve was looking at the line of gossamer grasses growing on the top of the wall at her right, at a little yellow speck in the Virgin's broken niche, that meant a golden-petalled flower, a late bloom of that wall-flower which decks the old Cathedral in gold when the spring comes and the swallow dares return.

Cameron sat down beside her on the edge of the great stone coffin; he wondered if it was the one in which the wise and valiant Alexander Stuart's head had rested. Happiest of a sad race, in that he died young, loved, and honoured. They were silent, because they were in such deep sympathy; they had always been in such deep sympathy. It was an hour, each felt, given to them out of a life—an hour never to return!

"I was taking this wreath for a friend," he said slowly. "She lost her son, who was a student here. He died of consumption, and the students in their red gowns carried him to rest one snowy

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day. It is one of the pictures which comes to my mind first when I think of the Cathedral. She cannot afford to come herself, but this is his birthday, and she always sends a few flowers. Poor woman!"

"I was thinking," Eve said suddenly and irrelevantly, "how little this place makes one's life seem. Just a moment in the sunshine, and we are gone, like the flicker of that dove's wing!"

"Yes, but life means a good deal to us, short though it is," he said. "It is just the very briefness that is the tragedy of life, for it makes one's mistakes so irreparable."

Eve turned and looked at him with a kind of desperate challenge. "Do you ever make mistakes?" Her voice came in a kind of husky whisper.

"Do I ever make mistakes?" he laughed bitterly. "I have felt lately as if my life had been all a mistake."

He met her eyes fairly then, and their souls seemed to rush together. It was a moment for hot breathless words, straight from the heart, where every barrier and door were thrown open, even to the Holiest of Holies. Such moments are rare in life; they come sometimes in the sunset, very often in the gloaming, when the soft veil of the night hides face from face; but this moment came to Cameron



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and to Eve in dazzling sunshine. It was bright on her face and on her glorious hair as he bent to look at her.

"I made a mistake," he whispered, putting his hand on hers, "when I thought I loved Molly. I knew my mistake when I saw you. It has been borne in upon me every day. I had never dreamt of love like that. I thought my affection, my admiration, my esteem for my little girl meant love; but when I saw you, and when your face haunted me night and day, when all my life seemed made of one desire to meet you, Eve, I knew that what I felt for her was what water is to wine. I tell you this, and then my lips are sealed. I had no right to say it at all. Only, just here and now, I felt that I must tell you the truth. I felt I had to lay bare my heart. God forgive me!"

She had listened with her eyes bent upon the grass. To hear that he loved her—that most exquisite moment in a woman's life—was enough for her then, as it is for all women. She did not look beyond the moment. "I must be true to Molly," his voice came in a kind of groan; "we must both of us be true to Molly."

"Molly!"

She spoke in a whisper; the colour faded slowly from her face. Yes, that was quite true. She drew a long breath as she saw how she had for-

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gotten. The moment was gone, the gray threads had to be taken up—all her life had seemed made up of gray threads till now!

"Ah well! this mistake is not one of the irreparable ones," she said, trying desperately hard to speak lightly. "And Molly is so good, she would make any man very happy. And you don't know at all that I should have made you happy. Probably I should not."

"I know that I love you," was all he said.

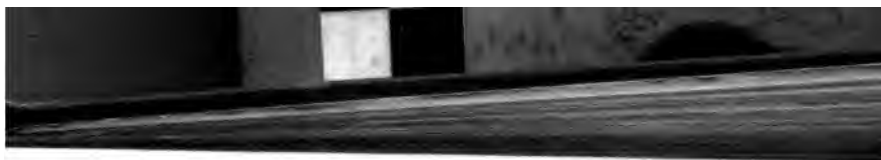
"Ah well! but love is not the only thing wanted, is it? There is respect, and—esteem. How do you know you could have respected me?"

She rose to her feet then; it seemed to her that already something had gone out of the sunshine, and that the murmur of the sea beyond the Gate of Our Lady was harsher and more insistent. And yet she could not bear to go away, and she looked at him with eyes that made his heart ache.

He read deeper than she knew; in spite of the smile he saw the bitterness.

"Let me come with you and put the flowers on the student's grave." She might do that, she thought. Molly would not grudge her that, even if she knew.

They walked down the path together, talking a little as he pointed out to her one or two of the famous names on the stones; both grudged every



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step that passed, every heavily-weighted moment that fled.

"He was a fine fellow," Cameron said, looking at the grassy mound as he put the flowers down, and lifted a spray of faded ivy from the side of the stone. "Full of ambition and of high hopes. He had tried for too high a stake, but he took life at fever heat, and it burned him out. Yet I have thought often that this was best for him, wisest and kindest. God knew. He took things hardly, he had a genius for suffering. Do you know what I mean? The woman he loved did not care for him, and was not worthy of him, though he did not know that. God knew what was in the future, and took him from the evil. This rest is best."

They moved away again. "It must be good, at all events, to acquiesce as you do in the decrees of Fate," Eve said. "Anyone, I suppose, can be stoical—stoicism only means iron nerves and a good digestion—but to acquiesce, and to see the meaning of suffering even now, is something to which I think I could never attain."

He made no answer to that at first, though he looked at her yearningly. There was so much in his heart to say, and so little time in which to say it.

"Some day you will come to see it, I think," he said. "I don't believe much in sermons, or even

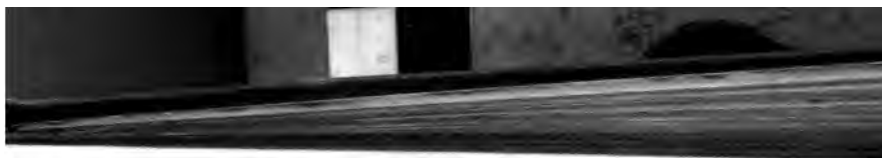
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in the value to us of other people's experiences; I think God teaches us in our own lives, in our own experiences. 'All roads lead to Rome', you know; all the sad roads, even the very saddest, lead one, I think, to the only knowledge that makes for peace in life. But we must tread that road alone. Do you know the verse about 'the narrow aisles of pain'? They are too narrow, even for two abreast."

They walked away down the long path which Eve was to add to her pictures of the great Cathedral, because he had told her of the student's funeral. Not only the glittering retinue of Bruce henceforward, and the long procession of monks and cardinals, king and nobles, but that picture of the simple little procession of red-gowned students carrying home to his last rest the tired scholar who had "taken life at fever heat". And then they passed under the great carved gateway, and stood together for just one moment. Eve looked up into his face, a great weight at her heart.

"I ought not to have told you," Cameron said with her hand in his; "I know I ought not to have told you. And yet, Eve, if I might have called you my Eve for only one moment! I wonder why you came to St. Rule's, I wonder why some things are!"

It was a kind of wailing protest, a kind of tor-



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tured questioning, and the girl shivered as if struck under it. Why, indeed? Why, indeed?

Under her breath she whispered to herself fiercely, "Because this was to be my punishment!" But she did not say that aloud, and he wrung her hands in both of his and then tramped away from her towards the College. She waited till the iron gate clanged after him and then followed, on her way home.

She stood at the chapel door for a moment as she went past, thinking of how the words of the little poem he had quoted had haunted her on the first day of her arrival:

"We did not think, we could not know,
How hardly Fate would deal with us".

No, they had not guessed or known!

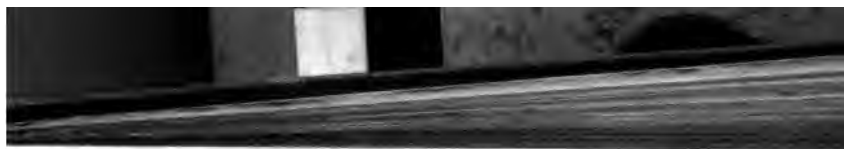
CHAPTER XII

Fire !

Lord Cantyre had arrived in time for afternoon tea, Davida having sent in a huge array of a certain deadly kind of Christmas bun, shortbread, and hot scones. Bertie, with his mouth full, had already begun tea, when Cantyre and his friend were shown in to the drawing-room; and shortly afterwards Professor Luttrell, his coat surreptitiously dusted by Davida in the hall with a very large clothes-brush, appeared in great haste to make them welcome, Davida's brush, with a desperate "wait a wee, sir", having followed him to the very door.

"I intended to be in time to make you welcome,—you and your friend, Lord Cantyre," he said, "but I have been unusually busy in the laboratory. I had been obliged to dismiss a very capable man (I really think, Molly my dear, I must have Sandy back again), and I could find nothing when I wanted it. I do not know if you are at all scientific, sir?" and he turned to the Colonial, who laughed and shook his head, "or take any interest in chemical research?"

"I don't know anything about chemistry, Pro-



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fessor; Lord Cantyre tells me that is your line," he said; "but I know a good deal about mining and engineering, though I say it, and I used to dabble a bit in stones before I left the old country. I have got his lordship's diamond here in my pocket. He tells me that you are going to tell him how to cut it. It's a fine stone; 'Advance Australia!' they should have christened it, I say."

Eve entered then, and Lord Cantyre went up to her eagerly, introducing his friend to her.

"We have brought the stone, Miss Luttrell. After tea Marsland shall produce it, and the Professor can report. I say, Professor, what a joke if it turned out that it wasn't a diamond after all! I say, I never thought of that."

"It's a diamond, right enough, and a splendid one," Marsland said, "as you will see. Your Uncle Ralph wants the future countess to wear it, set as a brooch like the Koh-i-noor. He was always talking of that. He said first he'd call it the 'Countess of Cantyre'."

"Well, I wish you'd come and have tea now," Bertie said rather crossly from the tea-table. "These scones are getting quite cold, and Cameron has sent to say he wants particularly to see me about five. I want to see your diamond, Cantyre, before I go. Come along, Molly, pour out, and I'll hand round."

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They all went up to the tea-table then, where Molly dispensed cups, and the earl helped himself to a large slab of the bun. "I believe this is Davida's method of getting rid of me," he remarked as he ate it. "It tastes jolly good, but I don't trust Davida since I chaffed her in the garden last summer. 'Sudden death', I should say! Have you tried it, Miss Luttrell?"

"If Davida made it, I have no fears," Eve said. There was a red flush on her usually pale face. "Davida's confectionery is reliable, is it not, Molly? Besides, Molly eats it. And Davida would not have the winds of heaven visit her face too roughly."

"I think even Davida warned me against indulging too much in Christmas bun," Molly smiled. "Please don't be rash, Lord Cantyre!"

They finished tea, and the old man led the way to the library, saying the light was better there.

Molly had lit one of the gas jets near the fire, but Mr. Marsland went to the window instinctively, when he took a little leather case from his inner breast-pocket, and then laid something white and sparkling on the red baize of the table-cover in the window. They all gathered round eagerly; Eve lifted the diamond and held it up.

"To think that this large dewdrop, this piece of white fire, should cost so much!" she said.



Fire!

"And although I suppose it is dreadful ignorance on my part, I have really seen paste jewels in the Palais Royal which seemed to shine as well. This is very beautiful, of course. Dear me! yes, it is very fine! Take it away from me, Lord Cantyre, before I break any of the commandments!"

He took the jewel from her laughingly, but put it against the dark-green serge of her dress for a moment, looking round as if for admiration. Against the dark-green the stone sparkled magnificently. It was about the size of a hazel-nut, a very white diamond with magnificent facets.

"That looks well, doesn't it?" Cantyre said; and then he put the stone against the ruddy waves of Eve's hair, a good deal of colour in his boyish face. He was evidently pleased with her admiration.

"Yes, it is a jolly big diamond. But for my part I shouldn't care to have money locked up in that way," Bertie remarked, his hands in his pockets. He had never liked Cantyre, and he was acting on an impulse now which prompted him to say something, anything, to belittle this possession. "You can't wear that stone on many occasions—only at big functions, I suppose. For my part, if it were mine, I should have it cut up and get my money's worth. What a Jew any man would look with that thing stuck in his shirt-front!"

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"I am surprised at you, Bertie!" The Professor looked at his son with deep reproach. "That is the speech of a Philistine, sir, and a Philistine of the deepest dye! Cut it up! You would destroy a beautiful gem, a beautiful specimen, for the sake of money! The diamond is interesting, as the largest yet found in Australia. It is beautiful in form and colour, perfectly flawless, and when properly cut—that business has been sadly bungled, Lord Cantyre,—it will be more valuable, I think, than has been thought. I shall write down my views as to the cutting, later." He was examining the stone with his pocket magnifying-glass as he spoke.

"I am glad you like it, Professor," Cantyre said lightly. "I know Uncle Ralph will be pleased to hear what you say. Put it down on the red baize again, Marsland; I want to see how it sparkles."

The young people had gathered round the table again, and Cantyre was gently rolling the edge of the cloth so that the stone ran to and fro, like a little iridescent bubble or a glittering rain-drop. The old man turned to the Australian then.

"I should like to show you some of my collection, sir, if you care to look at it," he said. "I have some models of famous jewels which I think would interest you in this connection, and some very fine



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specimens of New Zealand jade. My best cabinets I have put into the old stables at the back. We can reach them through this passage."

"Now, Daddy, don't go and catch cold in the stables!" Molly cried. "Be sure and shut all the doors." She was looking up from the floor where she was kneeling beside the table. The Professor nodded to her absently, leading the way by a door which opened from the library and led down to a passage into the stables and coach-house at the back. Both were full now of many cabinets and cases of minerals, some of them still unpacked. The Professor hurried on eagerly. He loved nothing better than to show his treasures to an interested spectator.

"Marsland will enjoy seeing the collection," Cantyre said then, standing by Eve's side. "He is rather a clever chap in his way, and I think some of his experiences might interest Professor Luttrell. He was telling me to-day about a vein of—"

The earl never finished his sentence. Just at that moment a shriek of appalling length and ear-piercing quality burst upon their ears, and the next moment the drawing-room door was burst open widely, and Bethia, capless and panting, came rushing into the library.

"Fire!" she was shrieking at the pitch of her voice. "Fire! murder! We are all on fire in the

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kitchen! And Davida's lying dead on the floor! For pity's sake, Miss Molly, come and see!"

This was alarming enough to get everyone from the room, and a rush was instantly made through the drawing-room, Bethia shrieking after them. Once in the hall, an unmistakable odour greeted them, and in the kitchen a sufficiently alarming spectacle met their eyes. The china cupboard opening off the kitchen was wreathed in flames, which were bursting through the wall, and Davida lay unconscious on her white stone floor, a mass of broken crockery surrounding her. The young men rushed at once to the cupboard, and, seizing a hatchet, Cantyre began to break down the shelves, while Molly and Eve attended to the old servant, and Bertie dashed on rather inefficient jugs of water. They saw very soon, however, that so small a supply was useless, and Bertie went rushing off, saying that he remembered there was an old garden-hose in the attic, and that he would fetch it down.

"Shall I summon the St. Rule's fire-engine?" Cantyre said then, going to and fro to the scullery with pails of water, his coat off and his face already grimy and smoke-wreathed. "Is there a fire-engine, do you know, Miss Luttrell? Now that I think, I don't know that I ever heard of one."

"There is a very old one, but I don't think it



Fire!

would be a bit of use," Molly said, looking up from the floor, where she and Eve were bathing Davida's face. "I saw a fire in High Street lately, and when they did get the engine up, all the hose was leaking. It distributed shower-baths gratis on the crowd, while the fire blazed cheerfully undisturbed. I believe they are agitating about one in the Town Council. I don't think it would be much use, but Bethia might run up at once and see. She could at least bring back some men. Do stop sobbing and shrieking, Bethia, and run for help, just as you are."

They were doing what they could, but still Davida showed no signs of returning consciousness, and Eve left the kitchen to get a bottle of smelling-salts, while Cantyre worked on manfully, holding the flames at least in check. Some time passed before Davida opened her eyes slowly at last, as Eve entered with the smelling-salts and some brandy, and by and by Bertie came hurrying back with the hose.

"I had an awful business to find it," he said, "but here it is at last. I'll fasten this end to the scullery tap, Cantyre, and then we'll soon get the better of the flames. Where the dickens is Bethia? That's it, Cantyre! Now we'll soon put this thing out! Off we go! Take care of yourself, Molly! Don't deluge the clock, Cantyre! Lord! what a mess!"

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"Bethia has gone to see about the fire-engine," Molly said, at which her brother jeered loudly. "You might as well fetch the Square Tower! But if she brings a few men I can employ them. However did Davida manage to burst up like this? She's coming to, though. Look at her. I say, wouldn't a douche from this make her sit up? That's right—we've got that end out!"

The old woman had opened her eyes, and now gazed vacantly before her, waving aside Eve's smelling-bottle as she tried to sit up.

"Have ye got the fire out?" she gasped weakly. "I was trying to save the mistress's dinner-set when I fell off the steps. This is an awfu' like thing! Mr. Bertie, have ye saved the best china?"

"The best china is all in smithereens at your feet, Davida," was the comforting rejoinder, "but we're getting the fire out. That's right, Cantyre, we will save the house. This is that blessed fireplace next door—it's just against that wall. I always knew this would happen. Oh, here are Bethia, and M'Neil the plumber! I say, M'Neil, here's a pretty mess!"

Bethia had returned with three or four men, and presently the kitchen was full. Davida was sufficiently herself once more to regard the men with suspicion and disfavour, and hastily wiping



Fire!

the water from her face and neck, she was able to keep her eye upon her kitchen, and upon the fragments of china, which she hastily seized and woefully piled upon the table. She allowed the men, however, to help Lord Cantyre and Bertie to tear down all the remaining shelves and extinguish the last flames, and she was even civil to Mr. Forret, when she saw that that gentleman had come in with the plumber, and was now working as efficiently as anyone. She allowed afterwards that "Sandy had his heid on his shoulders"; he had won her approval by rescuing a very fine tureen from a top shelf, which had somehow managed to escape the general devastation. He was very careful, too, not to spoil this unwonted state of affairs, and stoically refused a glass of beer when Bertie sent for it, aware that Davida's eye was upon him.

"I've turned over a new leaf, sir," he said solemnly, with a deep sigh. "I'm hoping you and Davida will say a word in my favour to the Professor. I hear he has got naebody to please him since I left, and mebbe after this opery here, and all this mess is cleared up, ye'll mind to say a word for me, Davida, for auld acquaintance sake. I could come the morn's morn. I've been off work for weeks, and I'm feeling fusionless and dune, for want o' food."

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Davida, however, was not so easily appeased, and she only tossed her head in answer, feeling that it would not do to give him any promise, especially in a scene of such excitement. So with a polite nod and a "Weel, gude-day to ye, Davida", Sandy went off with the other men, and she began energetically to dash off to the wash-house with the charred and broken shelves.

"I declare we have all worked liked Trojans! Come and have a wash, Cantyre, and then we'll come down and have some more tea. Bethia, you can make some more tea—unless you'd like something stronger, Cantyre? I suppose my father and Marsland have been lost all this time in the stables, and have heard nothing. If the blaze had been in the laboratory, the governor would have heard, and been off his head. He'll be thankful to hear that it was only the kitchen."

The two young men went upstairs then, and Molly and Eve returned to the drawing-room, just as the Professor and Mr. Marsland came into the library from the passage. Molly was putting coals on the fire—amid the general excitement it had been allowed to get very low—when her father and the Australian came into the room; Eve was standing at the French window, looking out into the darkness. Her mind had reverted to Uncle Geoff for a moment after the excitement, and she



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asked herself again: Had he really left? It was such a wild and impossible scheme. For the Professor would be sure to see that the diamond was safely put away— And just at that point she started, and something seemed to catch her heart. The diamond! They had left it on the table! Was it there still? Had they all gone mad?

She went to the entrance to the library just as Marsland came towards her.

“What is this about a fire?” he said, only half-hearing Molly’s explanations to her father, and then he glanced at the table. “Where has Cantyre put his diamond? Loose in his pocket, I’ll wager a guinea!”


“Where has he put it? It is there! We left it there! Is it not there?”

She had grown white and then crimson, and something in the terror of her voice made Molly break off her description of the fire and come towards the door.

“It is certainly not here; he must have taken it,” the Australian said. “Don’t be alarmed, Miss Luttrell. Cantyre has dropped it into his pocket.”

“He didn’t—he went rushing off, just as we all did! It is there, it must be there—it must have fallen down! He was rolling it about on the cloth! Eve, look—look on the carpet!”

Molly had gone down on her knees on the floor



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suddenly, white and trembling. The terror in her cousin's face was reflected in hers—it seemed as if mortal fear possessed them both. Molly searched with her little hands all over the carpet. She had seized the microscope which stood on the table with feverish strength, lifted it down, and then shook the cloth. They were still searching wildly when the two young men entered, and Eve looked up at Cantyre.

“Lord Cantyre, did you come in and take your diamond? Have you hidden it to frighten us?”

Molly waited with a kind of sobbing breath, and then her eyes went to Bertie, who was lounging behind the earl, seeming very little concerned, it appeared, at their alarm.

“No, I certainly didn't hide it. I declare I'd forgotten all about it,” Cantyre said. “By Jove! you don't mean to tell me the thing's gone! That can't be possible, for there has been no one but ourselves in the house. At least, I'm sure I didn't hear the front-door bell ring, and those fellows never left the kitchen. It can't have gone, Miss Luttrell. Let's look again. It must have rolled on to the floor.”

“We have looked, Lord Cantyre,” Molly said in a stifled voice; “it isn't there. I have looked in all these corners.”

“My dear, my dear! This is very dreadful!



Fire!

But it must be there, Molly!" the Professor cried. "We left it there on the table. You must have forgotten, Lord Cantyre, I think, and put it into your pocket. I am apt to do that kind of thing myself, as Davida will tell you. I put everything in my pocket. She has told me that she has taken out as many as half a dozen match-boxes, and all kinds of miscellaneous articles. But I didn't do this, for I remember that you were looking at the jewel as we left the room; and yet—of course, if I were mistaken—it is quite possible I was mistaken—"

He began turning out his pockets, producing indeed, as he had said, many "miscellaneous objects"; but the diamond was not there, certainly, and Molly put them all back, her hand on his arm.

"It wasn't you, Daddy; it couldn't have been you."

"It is mysterious, it is inexplicable. Examine the window," Marsland said. "No, that's fastened all right. Any gardeners about, Professor? You have a fine old garden, I see."

"No, I only have a man in once a week, and this is not his day," the Professor said. "Besides, he is a most worthy man; perfectly honest. We could not think of him. I have known him all my time here. I have left him alone with cases of most valuable specimens."

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"And the rest of you were all in the kitchen putting out the fire?" Marsland continued. "Did nobody leave the kitchen?"

"I left it for one," Bertie announced. "I went up to the attic for the garden-hose. But I hope no one suspects me!"

He had flamed up furiously. Bertie's temper was always easily lit. Cantyre laughed carelessly, slapping him on the back.

"Of course we don't! We don't suspect anybody yet, though of course the diamond didn't walk off by itself. What do you think, Marsland? It's a clear case of magic."

"It must have been walked off with," the other said coolly. "Let me see, there are three doors to this room. The door we went out by, leading by a long passage into those stables. You shut the stable door, Professor, for the draught, and it was so dark in that passage that anyone could have got in by that large back gate which opens to the front of the house, while you people were all engaged with your fire. That's one possibility; that's the outside possibility, as it were. I do not think we should have heard them. Indeed the gate was open. Then, of course, anyone could have come in through the drawing-room. That's possibility number two."

"That's the house party possibility," Bertie



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interrupted rudely; "that means you or me, Miss Luttrell, for I met you on the stairs with the smelling-salts, did I not? All the others remained in the kitchen except Bethia, who went to fetch plumbers, and brought them back."

"Yes," said Eve coolly; "so far as that goes, either you or I had an opportunity of taking the diamond."

"Eve, don't!" The words came with a kind of sobbing breath from Molly, and Bertie turned round on her mockingly.

"Look at Molly!" he cried tauntingly; "I suppose she suspects us both. Out with it, Molly!"

"The third door," Marsland said then, breaking in upon them, "leads into the garden, though I don't think the thief came from there. He could not, if the door is locked, but it is entrance number three to the room. There's just the remote possibility that there was someone in the garden. I say! By Jove, the trick has been done from the garden! Look here! Look at this lock! Look at the door! The lock has been picked, and the thief has come in here, while we were all out of the room, and has made off with the stone! It's too late now, I expect, but let's search the garden." They went rushing out, the Professor with them, but Molly stood on the mat, with the broken lock in her hand. What did this mean? Was it not



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an unanswerable negative to the dreadful suspicion which had tortured her? Bertie would never have taken the jewel in this way. He would not have needed to break the lock. How wicked she was, how cruel, to have even thought of him for a moment!

She joined them then, but the garden search was unavailing, though Marsland searched well and long. They went in, baffled, and then the three men put on their hats and went up to communicate with the police.



CHAPTER XIII

The Disappearance of the Diamond

Davida, Mrs. Maclaren, the washerwoman (who had been also Uncle Geoff's landlady, and who had been summoned to assist in clearing up the débris of the fire), and Bethia, were seated round the kitchen table partaking of a late tea after the events narrated.

Davida had been considerably shaken by her fall and fainting fit, and she was also abjectly depressed over the whole state of affairs. The destruction of the china-press, and of the china itself, the destruction of her kitchen wall, the necessity for workpeople, plumbers, painters, and paper-hangers, in her domain, the thought of the clearing up, and of living meanwhile in what she called "an awfu' clarty mess and uproar" for a considerable time, not to mention the overwhelming news about the diamond, had all conjoined to cast Davida into the very depths of black despair. To say that she was cross, and to say that she was sepulchral, is very mildly to express Davida's frame of mind. Her tea tasted like the waters of

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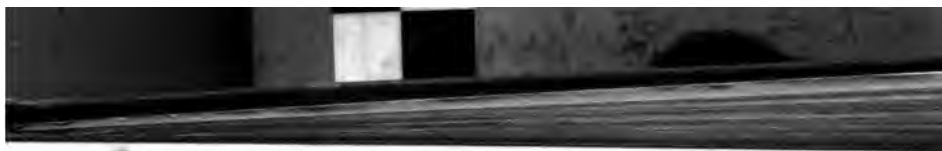
Marah to her that day, and her face expressed her feelings.

Bethia, on the other hand, seemed rather excited. The news of the loss of the diamond had gone through the house like wildfire, and they were all aware that Lord Cantyre was at that moment visiting the police-station.

"We'll hae the police doon the nicht, looking through a' oor boxes," Bethia said with a suppressed giggle. "I'll hae to get up, Davida, and gie mine a tidy. He'll be searching through a' the hoose, and I've nae doot that we'll baith be suspected. It's an awfu' like thing; and if I'd had ony idee o't, I'd never hae ta'en a place i' the toon. I dinna ken what my mither will say. Better if I'd hided i' Pittenweem wi' the Provost. Though I'm fond o' Miss Molly."

The aggravation of this speech was really more than Davida could stand, and almost caused her to choke with wrath. She put down her tea-cup, regarding the damsel with burning eyes.

"'You and me 'll be suspected?' I like your impudence! And ye 'dinna ken what your mither will say'? Putting me in the same breath as yoursel'! And you'll 'gang upstairs and tidy your box', will ye? Sitting idling your time ower your trash there, the while Marget Maclaren and me clears awa'! Ye'll dae naething of the kind! Ye'll



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set to whenever ye've drunk your tea and wash that floor, that's what you'll do!" At which poor Bethia retired into rebellious silence.

She was completely quenched, but Mrs. Mac-laren shook her head lugubriously as she passed her cup in for more tea. She, too, rather enjoyed the situation, and the prominence it would give her amongst the local gossips. Her house, she had remarked, "would gang like an hotel" that night.

"At the same time, Davida, it'll make an awfu' uproar i' the toon," she said now. "The lassie is richt eneuch as far as that gangs. Ye're a clever woman, Davida; hae ye ony suspicion yersel' as to wha has gane off wi' it?"

"If I had, Marget, this is no the hour nor the place for me to speak," Davida said with a withering glance at the white cap opposite. "We've yet to get to the root o' the matter. The gentlemen were asking me if there had been ony strangers i' the hoose within the last week, and of course I telt them no. Ye see, it's the business o' the broken lock. I never gang near that door to lock it o' nights, when I dae the rest, for it's aye keepit lockit, and there's nae workmen been here to my knowledge, as I telt them. And the Professor has dune withoot a bottle-washer for five days noo. So, as I was saying— What's the matter wi' the

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lassie noo? Sure as daith, Bethia, you're possessed the day!"

"Davida!" and Bethia leapt to her feet, capsizing the entire contents of her cup over the table-cloth as she did so. "There was the glazier from Maclean's! I forgot all about him till this minute! And he never came back! The glazier that was ordered to come in to mend the broken pane i' the library door yesterday!"

"What glazier? What broken pane?" demanded Davida, too much appalled to make any comment yet upon the stream of tea which was trickling into her lap, and had entirely submerged her toast. "I've heard tell o' no glazier, and there was none ordered to come here tae my knowledge. Ye're dreaming, lassie."

"I'm no'!" Bethia cried; "he was here the afternoon that you gaed out! Rather a queer-looking carlie, as I thocht at the time; and he didna speak quite like ony St. Rule's man. He said he had come to mend the broken pane i' the door—there is a pane cracked, Davida,—so I just showed him in, and after a wee I met him comin' oot, and he said his pane was too sma', and he would come back to-day."

"And ye never spoke o' that till this minute! Ye're a black-dyed sinner, Bethia, nae mair and nae less! But you'll come straight wi' me this



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minute, and tell Miss Molly and the Professor."

Bethia, unrepentant, but very much excited, accompanied the old woman then to the drawing-room, where Molly and her cousin sat alone, Professor Luttrell having retired to the laboratory as usual.

Both the girls looked up and listened intently when Davida told her story. Eve's heart sickened within her as she heard. This was Uncle Geoff, she told herself. He had not left for Dundee. Her presentiment of trouble and of evil had been a true one. He had conceived the daring plan of breaking the lock, and of hanging about in the garden till opportunity offered. It had been early dark that day, almost dark, when the diamond was produced. Fate had played into his hands, as if it wished to favour him. He must have been watching, and have seen them leave the room. The blinds of the window looking into the garden were never drawn down, she knew. Molly always said she never shut out the garden. He must have seen their hasty exit to the kitchen, and made off with the diamond while the Professor and Mr. Marsland were looking at the collection. She turned cold as she pieced all this together. Not a piece was wanting in the mosaic—would that there had been!

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Molly, on her part, listened with an intense feeling of relief. How wrong she had been to think of Bertie—even for a moment to have suspected him! She longed for him to return; she felt as if she owed him reparation and apology, though it would not do, of course, to let him ever see again that she had suspected him. He had been passionately angry before at the very notion.

"I think this is rather important, Davida," she said gently, "and we will tell Lord Cantyre and Mr. Marsland when they return. Bethia must describe the old man very carefully. It is certainly a great pity that she did not tell you on your return that the man had been here, but she did not, of course, know how important it was."

"Bethia's mind, Miss Molly, is never bent on her work, or her business in this hoose," Davida said trenchantly. "It passes me what servant-lassies' minds are bent on i' these days—their ain follies and their ain vanities! I'll speak to her twice whiles afore she hears me."

Bethia tossed her head.

"I didna see that it was my duty to tell you, Davida," she said rebelliously. "I thocht he had come, as he was ordered to come. How was I to suspect that he was a thief in disguise? I wisna brocht up i' Pittenweem looking oot for thieves wi' panes o' gless under their airms."



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"No, we didn't expect you to suspect, Bethia," Molly said gently; "but you might have mentioned the matter to Davida. What do you think, Eve? Don't you think this must be the clue to the mystery?"

"I suppose so." Eve was standing at the window, looking out into the soft darkness of the garden, where the great clumps of ivy on the grass made violet-black shadows here and there. "It certainly looks very suspicious—still, one never knows. It is not safe to make too sure."

"But this man must have had something to do with it. It was clearly he who broke the lock," Molly said. "The putting in of the pane was a fraud, for he did not put one in."

"Yes, yes, of course! The thing will be to find him. It is a horrible affair!" the girl cried suddenly, turning round. "I had a presentiment of evil from the very first about this diamond. Why did he bring it here at all? Things like this affect everyone. We shall live in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust now till it is all cleared up. Do you think, Molly, that the police here are clever? Do you think that they will get on the track of this man?"

Her voice was strangely anxious; Molly did not quite understand the tone of painful eagerness.

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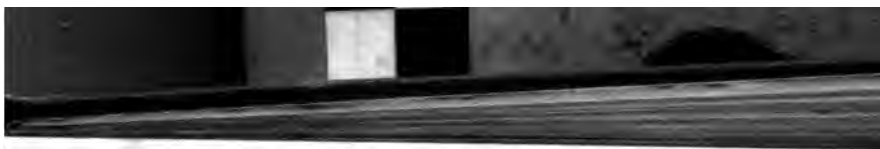
"I hope so," was all she said.

And then the bell rang, and Davida and the handmaiden left the room.

Eve went upstairs after that, leaving her cousin alone. Lord Cantyre had not returned, and Bertie had gone out to pay the visit he had spoken of, to Neil Cameron. There was a fire in Eve's room, and the girl sank down before it, holding out her hands to the blaze. She felt cold all over. If Uncle Geoff were found, would he tell the truth? Would he bring her into the story? Would Uncle Geoff be found?

"I knew that he used to be concerned in shady transactions," she said to herself. "I know that my poor mother dreaded and feared him, just as his own wife dreaded and feared him, and would start at the sound of his voice, or his step on the stairs. I fancy he passed some years in a foreign prison, though I never heard the truth of that, but I never dreamt for a moment that he would attempt anything so daring as this. He must have planned it all very carefully, more carefully than I suspected. The question is, has he got off? Oh, I shall live in terror, I shall live as if I were on the edge of a precipice, till I know! If I had a penny in the world I would go away and be quit of it all! But I have nothing!"

She dressed for dinner presently, and resolutely



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banished all care from her face. Bertie had not returned, but the fact caused no particular comment, as he was given to absenting himself from meals on many occasions. Lord Cantyre and Mr. Marsland dined, and the conversation turned, of course, almost entirely upon the missing jewel.

"The superintendent was to call himself to-night, Professor," Cantyre said, after Bethia had put down the dessert and withdrawn. "He was not there when we went in, but we explained the story to a particularly dense policeman. I asked if there had been any suspicious characters about lately, and he said not that he knew of. He was a peculiarly silent man, stupid to a degree, I should say—eh, Marsland?"

"I should not have called him exactly a shining light," Marsland said, peeling his pear deliberately, "and if I were you, Cantyre, I should get a man from London. You need not do that openly, of course—he could live here on the quiet as it were, and make his enquiries. The description of the diamond is already in London. I telegraphed to Scotland Yard myself on our way up. No one will be able to sell it there."

"I don't know what Uncle Ralph will say," Cantyre said ruefully. "I begin to think you were right, Miss Luttrell, and that I ought never to have brought the diamond here. But who

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would have suspected a thief in innocent St. Rule's?"

"But the thief is not from innocent St. Rule's. I am sure this is an old hand," Molly said lightly.

They had risen, and she and Eve left the room, the latter quite silent. But she turned on Molly almost feverishly when they were alone.

"Don't let us talk of the diamond any more, Molly, if you love me," she said as they seated themselves, Molly holding up a fan between her face and the firelight. "It has got on to my nerves already, and we shall be, oh, so deadly sick of the subject before it is done with!"

And then, as Molly looked at her wonderingly, she went over and kissed her cousin, and then walked back to the piano. Molly noticed that she was unusually restless.

"You don't know what nerves mean, do you, Molly? You are a little placid, sweet-tempered child! Nerves are another name for temper, are they not? A sort of decent veil. And you know I always told you that I was bad-tempered. Bad-tempered people are 'gey ill to live wi'', as Carlyle's mother said of him."

She had strayed to the piano, and began to play, looking up at Molly over the sheet of music.

"We want Bertie to cheer us up with one of his music-hall songs. He really has a lovely voice,



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Molly, a voice worth a small fortune. Where is Bertie, by the by?"

"He was to go and see Neil. I don't expect that he will be back till late;" and then Molly sank back in her chair with a long sigh, her hands in her lap. In the relief of thinking that Bertie had nothing to do with the disappearance of the diamond, she had almost forgotten the ever-present danger in which he stood. Alas! they were neither of them any nearer an answer to that puzzle, any nearer the chasing away of that black fear. And it was coming slowly closer and closer.

The superintendent appeared about ten o'clock, and went to Professor Luttrell's study, where the three men gave him a minute description of what had taken place, Bethia also being examined. The girls did not go in, and later on Marsland accompanied the man up the quiet old street, on his way to the hotel. He was leaving for London shortly.

"I don't suppose you have any theory yet, have you?" he said, the superintendent having listened with almost no remark of any kind to all that had been told him. Marsland could not quite make him out.

"No, I'll have to think about it. Of course on the first blush it looks as if the thief had come from the garden, and been the glazier the servant

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tells us of. I'll make a pretty thorough search in St. Rule's to-morrow morning. I'm going down to the station now to make some enquiries there, and see who has come and gone lately. I doubt, however, if I shall be told very much. Railway people are seldom observant. It looks to me rather a longish business. A queer job altogether. You see, a man who would attempt a thing like that must have laid his plans pretty carefully. It was foolish of Lord Cantyre, very foolish, to allow the thing to be so widely talked of."

And then they parted at Marsland's hotel, and the superintendent went his own way.

Bertie was very late in returning that night, but the light was left burning for him in the hall, and he had taken the key. Davida knew better than to sit up for him, and the house was wrapped in silence when the young man entered, and looked into the drawing-room, where the careful old woman usually left sandwiches and claret in case he should want anything. The gas was turned down, but there was a little fire still in the grate, and some logs in the big brass box by the side of the fender. Bertie threw on a log, and stood in deep and absorbed thought, his hands behind his back. A very anxious cloud was on his face, and he was so lost in his reverie that he started violently when the French window opened softly.



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A woman stood on the threshold, and entered as if not perceiving him; when he came out into the firelight she started violently.

It was Eve, still in her evening dress, with a shawl thrown over her bare shoulders. She had started as if in fear, he saw, and for a moment the colour left her face, but she recovered almost before he could speak.

Yet they looked at each other for a moment in silence before she tried to laugh, approaching the fire and kneeling down to hold out her hands to the blaze. It was very cold, and he could see that they looked chilled, as she did herself.

"I dare say you thought I was a ghost," she said lightly. "The fact is, I fancied I saw someone in the garden. It was very foolish of me, but I immediately threw on a shawl and went out to see. I had been sitting up reading."

"Yes, I think it was decidedly foolish," Bertie remarked frankly; "because, you see, if it had been a burglar, you might have got knocked on the head. Girls never think of consequences."

"Oh, I didn't think of a burglar! I am always on the look-out for ghosts, you know,—for that phantom coach thundering down South Street, with a wild banging of the door;—for the Cardinal's ghost in the Castle—" She stopped and shivered for a moment, remembering the very substantial

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ghost she had really met there. "And then Davida told me that George Buchanan's ghost was said to haunt this house, moaning over his sins in reviling and slandering his queen, I hope." She laughed again, getting closer to the fire. "I did so want to meet him. Such an interesting ghost he would be, the horrid old pedant! You don't believe in 'spooks', of course, Bertie, and you are laughing at me—but a great many clever people believe in them, and write reams about them nowadays, don't they? I always think it would be so very interesting to hear a ghost's views on our modern life."

"No, I don't believe in spirits—I think the whole thing is rot," Luttrell said vigorously. "And I don't think anyone believes in them really." He felt inclined to add, "And I have my doubts, Miss Luttrell, if you went out ghost-hunting", but he thought it better on the whole to keep this to himself, while Eve went on warming her chilly hands, her head bent. She did not think much, on the whole, of Master Bertie, and she made the mistake of imagining that it did not matter how he took her lame explanation. It is always foolish to underrate stupid people, for they are invariably the most unexpected. And yet this is just the mistake clever people usually make.



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Bertie, however, was inclined for more conversation; that is to say, he liked to hear the sound of his own voice. He was always fond of talking if he could secure a good listener.

"I have been spending the evening with Cameron," he said. "You don't mind my taking a cigarette, do you? He's a good fellow, is Cameron, but I must say I don't quite understand him. All evening something has been puzzling me about him."

"What has been puzzling you?"

Eve had had her head bent, twisting the one shabby little ring she wore round and round, but she raised her eyes now and looked at him keenly. There was something slightly sarcastic in the inflection of her voice when she said: "After all, I do not know that we can truthfully say that we thoroughly 'understand' anyone. Men and women, if they have any depth at all, are not to be sounded in a few years' friendship. We think, perhaps, we know them, and we find suddenly that we have been utterly mistaken all along. We have seen only the waves, the shallows, the little ripples on the surface. The real depths are quite unplumbed. And if something happens which stirs up all the waters, we find we have immensely underrated, or immensely over-valued them. So I am not surprised that Cameron

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puzzles you a bit, Bertie. Perhaps he puzzles me too."

Her voice fell away at the last, and she spoke only half-aloud.

The boy had listened to her half-petulantly, half-crossly. He did not care for this kind of talk; it was not the kind of conversation with which other girls regaled him. Eve spoke too much. Bertie shared St. Paul's views on women-folk, and would fain have kept them more in the background.

"What bothers me," he said, "is that sometimes Cameron looks so deuced unhappy. What business has he to be unhappy? He's an awfully good fellow, no one knows that better than I, but what right has he to be glum? Everyone says he'll get on and get a Chair; that book of his created quite a sensation, I was told. And he is engaged to Molly! Now it's just this, and it's what occurred to me to-night when I mentioned Molly's name to him—I don't believe Cameron cares for Molly in the right way! I really don't."

"I don't see how you can judge, I don't see how you can pretend to judge. He is not a man to wear his heart on his sleeve," Eve flashed out indignantly. She had got to her feet, and there was a crimson flush on her cheek. "You must



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never say such things, Bertie. You must never hint them."

"Oh, I don't intend to!" he said, "I've a jolly sight more to think of. But I merely made the remark. He doesn't talk of her the way a fellow usually talks of the girl he loves."

"I was not aware that fellows usually talked much—that is to say, to the ordinary public—of the girls they loved."

"I am not the 'ordinary public'!" Bertie cried indignantly. "And, after all, Eve, you girls don't know a bit how fellows talk."

"Perhaps not. But you are mistaken, of course you are mistaken, in this," she said, and then lifted her shawl and walked half-way across the room. "Good-night, Bertie! Don't mention my ghost-hunting to Molly, or to Davida, or they will be down upon me. And don't—but of course you never would—mention that ridiculous notion of yours to anyone else."

He merely nodded, his hands in his pockets, and then she went lightly up the shallow old stairs, where the moonlight was flooding the great stained window, and shining through the roofless ruins on to the gravestones on the chapel walls and floor. She stood and looked, and her eyes darkened.

"To think that empty-headed boy has seen what she has never seen!" she murmured to herself.

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"Oh, my dear Molly! and what you must never see!"

She mounted the stairs then, and after a moment's hesitation went along the passage till she reached Molly's room. She opened the door, and looked in for a few moments at the girl lying peacefully asleep on her pillows, and then she turned and went back to her own room.

"I wonder what she really was up to!" Bertie was cogitating before the fire, while he ate one of Davida's sandwiches. "I don't believe all that rot about ghosts. Fact is, I don't understand that girl. She's deuced good-looking, but she's deep, or my name isn't Bertie Luttrell. I don't like deep people."



CHAPTER XIV

Bethia Tells the Truth

Molly had caught cold, and as her chest was delicate, Davida commanded her to remain in bed, with a steam-kettle in the room, and poultices on her chest. She attended to her young mistress herself, leaving the kitchen-cleaning to Mrs. Maclaren and Bethia; and as it was a beautiful frosty day, Molly fairly drove her cousin out of doors, so that the house was comparatively empty, Lord Cantyre having gone to show his friend the famous Links.

At luncheon Eve and the earl returned together, but Bertie was not to be seen, and Molly sent down Davida to see that the Professor was torn from the laboratory, and to ask if anyone had heard news of her brother.

Davida was gone some time, and when she returned Molly saw that she was the bearer of no satisfactory news.

"I've been gane a lang time," Davida said, "but I'd some work to get your father to come; and I'm sorry to say, Miss Molly, that he's ta'en back Sandy, aifter a' my hopes that he'd had the go-by for guid

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an' a'. There he was, working away as calm as ye like, and as impident as ye like. 'A merry Christmas to ye, Davida,' he says, 'and a guid New Year, when it comes! Ye'll be making het pint the last nicht o' the year, as usual, and ye'll no' forget me i' the laboratory! Het pint is a drink that naebody can beat ye at, Davida, as I weel ken. I'll be here, for me and the Professor'll be very busy. We've just started some new experiments; there's nae use o' my explaining them, for your bent is no' the least scienteefic!' That's what he said to my face, Miss Molly, as I'm a living woman! I looked at the Professor, and he kent fine I was angered. When I garred him leave the place and come in to his lunch, telling him Lord Cantyre was back, I was at him about Sandy, and a' he could say was that the last man he had broke three pieces o' apparatus the first day. There was nae use o' arguing when apparatus is in question, as I weel kent, so I just saw him at his lunch, and then asked about Mr. Bertie." She produced a letter from her pocket then. "It seems that he left this for you, and that he's off by the train."

Molly's expression changed, and her eyes opened wide as she heard this startling piece of news. "But why did he not come to see me? Has he gone to Edinburgh?"

"He had letters by the forenoon post, Bethia



Bethia Tells the Truth

said, and rung the bell, and asked if you were up. You were asleep then, it was just after I'd ta'en off the poultices, and Bethia told him. She said he went leaping upstairs, and made her bring his Gladstone bag, a' in great excitement, and then he dashed doon again, and wrote this letter, took a bit o' chicken, and then went tearing to the station, carrying his ain bag. There's never a time, Miss Molly, that you're laid up, and my hands full, but that things gang wrang i' this hoose. His flannels were no' aired. Bethia took them in frae the laundry as they were."

Molly had opened the envelope, and was now rapidly reading the contents. Bertie wrote in much haste, in his usual sprawling hand, with many dashes and points of exclamation:—

"I have just had a most surprising letter, Molly. As I hear you are ill and asleep I won't waken or worry you. You know I told you of my friend Bertram, the leading tenor at the Gaiety. He always used to say that I ought to go on the comic opera stage, and I said I wished to goodness I could! I wrote to him lately, when I was so sick of things, and asked if he could lend me some money, and I had a letter from him to-day, to say that he could not spare a fiver, but that a fellow he knew, who had got a leading part in the

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company that's going to the States with *Pretty Pansy*, had failed them, and that I could have the part if I liked! I knew the music, he'd heard me sing it often, and the manager took his word for my voice. It was the rarest chance! They start on Friday by the *Teutonic*. He said I was to meet him in London to-morrow, if I could come, and it would be all arranged. I am to have ten guineas a week, and it will be no end of fun! So I am off, Molly, and you can break it to the governor. I knew it would upset him fearfully if I dashed into the laboratory, and he'd never get it into his head within half an hour! So you take your time and tell him!

"I have only paper enough to add that you are not to worry about that story I told you. I have had an awful slice of luck, and it's paid!!! I wrote and posted the letter to Thorpe senior last night; but I'm not allowed to tell you how I got the money. Write to the St. Pancras Hotel, soon. Tell Davida I'm engaged as a clown in a circus! She'll enjoy that!

"Your loving,

"BERTIE."

Molly laid down this epistle, too bewildered at first to take in its full meaning, but as it dawned upon her, she lay back upon her pillows feeling blank and bewildered. The whole thing sounded



Bethia Tells the Truth

so unlikely, so amazing. Bertie had had "a slice of luck"! Someone had paid £200 for him! Who could it possibly be? No one in all St. Rule's, she was certain of that. None of Bertie's friends or acquaintances had anything like that sum to spare. He "was not allowed to say who it was". Why not? He had left for the States, or was to leave on Friday!

"Whaur has he gone, Miss Molly?" Molly explained as well as she could, Davida lifting her hands in horror.

"On the stage! Singing on the stage!" she ejaculated. "Comic opery! The Professor's son! This is an awfu' come doon! He's daft, Miss Molly, clean daft! He should be pit in restraint!"

"Oh, I don't know that it is as bad as all that, Davida," Molly said, trying to be cheerful. "Of course it's a wonderfully good salary, and Bertie has a lovely voice. I don't think he would ever have settled down at St. Rule's to help Father, he is not the least bit scientific. I am afraid he isn't very clever. And if he is to be happy in this life—"

"Happy, Miss Molly! Wi' a lot o' dancin' painted Jezebels! I've seen them in Dundee, and a woman I kent described to me aince what she called a 'pantomime'. A pretty pantomime it was! Kicking a' ower the place, she said, i' pink muslin

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petticoats up till their knees! A lot o' stuff an' havers ye couldna' understand! No' a word o' sense or eedification! It will never dae to let this come oot i' the toon. We'll just say that he's gane to the States on 'business'. For pity's sake, Miss Molly, just ca' it 'business'!"

Molly laughed at that, but when the old servant went away she read and re-read the letter, puzzled and rather troubled.

She had just laid it aside on the table, when Bethia appeared with a tray which Davida had sent up, and then Molly noticed that the girl was hesitating, as if unwilling to depart. Molly had always been very kind to Bethia, and had stood between her and a good many scoldings. She thought something was wrong in that direction now.

"What is it, Bethia?" she said now in her gentle voice. "Do you want to ask me anything? Is it the New-year's Ball?"

"No, Miss Molly, it's nothing like that. It's something—it's something I wanted to say."

"Yes, Bethia."

"The Professor sent for us—Davida and me—just now," Bethia said, looking round carefully to see that the door was shut. "He said that the superintendent was coming this morning, and was going to ask us a lot of questions. Before that,



Bethia Tells the Truth

Mr. Marsland was here, just before lunch, and he called me into the library and asked a heap o' questions."

"Yes, Bethia."

The girl hesitated again. "They ask such a lot o' questions, Miss Molly. What we were doing every moment of that afternoon. And there was something—something I wanted to say."

"Yes, Bethia."

"I don't want—I don't want to say anything, but I thoct I would tell you about it," Bethia said; she came up to the bed then and stooped over her young mistress, whispering the next words:

"The gentleman was particular in asking if I'd seen anyone come out of the library after the fire. I said—I said—'No'."

"It was—it was the truth, Bethia, was it not? You did not see anyone?"

"Yes, Miss Molly, I did!"

"Bethia!"

"I'll tell you how it was, Miss Molly. You said to me to run, just as I was, and see about the fire-engine, but I was an awfu' mess, and I thoct I'd just run upstairs and get my hat and jacket. I didn't dare go by the back-stairs, for Davida was coming too, and she wouldn't have let me. I was coming down again—I hadn't been a minute

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—when I met Mr. Bertie coming out of the drawing-room. He seemed to be angry when he saw me on the stairs, and said why hadn't I gone for the fire-engine? I didn't say anything about meeting him, I thocht it better not, but I wanted to tell you. And this forenoon, when I got him his Gladstone bag, he gave me this, Miss Molly, and said not to mention anything about meeting him coming out o' the drawing-room that day. I promised I wouldn't."

There was a dead silence after this, and the two looked into each other's faces. Bethia was an intelligent girl, and she had evidently put two and two together. Molly had been kind to her, as has been said, and Bethia was very fond of Molly. She saw the colour fade now from her young mistress's face. Molly sat staring straight before her. What could this mean? Bertie would never be so mad, so insane! He knew the risks he ran; his manner had been perfectly frank and above-board. It was impossible—quite impossible that he could have dreamed of touching the diamond. Even if he had taken it too, he would not have had time to dispose of it in order to pay his debt. And yet, what did the whole thing seem to point to? What would be the inevitable conclusion to which most people would come? Bertie needed the money desperately—had already committed a



Bethia Tells the Truth

forgery—he declared his debt had been paid, but refused to tell how—he had suddenly left the place, and was leaving the country! A stranger hearing this story would inevitably conclude—what?

“Don’t look so white, Miss Molly. I’ll not breathe a word of it to anyone,” Bethia whispered, “least of all to Davida. Davida would not tell a lie for all the universe. Hush, here she comes!”

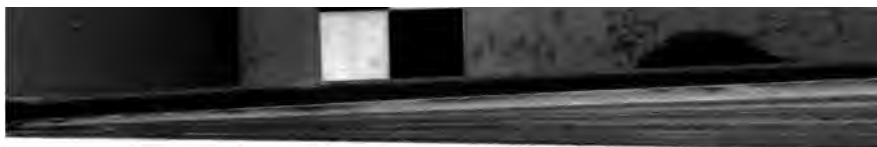


CHAPTER XV

Molly's Secret

Christmas passed with a strange heavy cloud hanging over the old house, and when Lord Cantyre left to pay some visits in Edinburgh, Molly was still confined to her room, and, rather to Davida's surprise, did not make any very apparent effort to leave it. Hitherto she had been always anxious to return to her duties at once, and it was Davida who had urged caution and care. On this occasion, however, Davida would fain have seen her charge anxious to be up and downstairs again. She could not quite understand Molly at this crisis, though the girl, knowing the warm and tender heart which beat for her under Davida's austere exterior, carried a brave front to the old servant, and before her was apparently cheerful and at ease.

She was not so careful before her friend. She said sometimes to her cousin that she could not have got on without her. For it was wonderful how useful Eve had become in the house, and how she had won even Davida's respect and admiration.



Molly's Secret

"There's nae doot," Davida said, "that Miss Luttrell has her heid weel set on her shoulders."

Which was much for her to say.

Eve was standing by Molly's chair to-day, looking out upon the old chapel, and Molly's delicate face was turned towards the fire, which her cousin had just replenished with logs. The room was bright and cheerful, and Eve had been arranging a glorious bunch of yellow chrysanthemums at the invalid's elbow; but there was no brightness on the small white face, and Molly's silence seemed at last to strike her companion as she turned from the window.

"You can't think, Molly, how lovely the chapel looks in this snow. The tombstones are covered, and the ivy is laden down. Why don't you come to the window and look out? You don't half realize your privileges in having a view like this to look at."

"No, I suppose I don't," Molly said listlessly. "And of course it is very lovely. Have you heard anything about the detective? Davida told me that it was said in the town that one had arrived from London."

Eve's face changed then, and she turned her back on the chapel with a sharp breath.

"I heard that Lord Cantyre had sent for a detective. I met him in the street yesterday, but

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he was with Professor Arundel, so I didn't stop. Can't we leave the question of the diamond alone, Molly? I am so sick of hearing about it on all hands. I've really given up walking in the streets now, and betaken myself to the cliffs altogether. It is every second person I meet, 'Any news about the diamond, Miss Luttrell?' till I am sick of the very word."

Molly leant back in her chair once more, taking up a Japanese fan, which she held before her face. Eve had gone back again to the chapel, and was drumming with one hand lightly on the panes.

"Do you remember saying, Eve, that you wished he would not bring it to this house?" she said very low. "I have often thought of that. I wish so too, I wish we had never heard of it. It has brought nothing but misery and misfortune."

Eve turned round at that, a look of puzzled surprise upon her face. Why did Molly say this? Was it only because the theft had taken place in the house? Was it for her father's sake? But the Professor, once he had been told that a detective had been sent for, had seemed very easily to banish the subject from his mind; he was not worried or overpowered by it, he was far too deeply immersed in a set of new experiments. The investigations upon the new anæsthetic were proceeding satisfactorily, and Sandy was back at



Molly's Secret

work, in a delightfully obedient and chastened mood. Why should Molly take the matter so deeply to heart? She made up her mind to ask the question.

"Molly, why do you take this thing so desperately to heart?" she asked abruptly. "I don't know why you should. After all, it has nothing to do with you or yours. And if the thief is discovered—well, he deserves his fate, does he not? All wrong-doing deserves its punishment, that's your creed, Molly, isn't it, and the creed of all good Christian people? Davida isn't alone in rejoicing in the inevitable punishment for the wicked, and in the necessity of paying the uttermost farthing. Though, of course, you put that all in a milder way, if you put it in words at all. Why should it all hurt and grieve you so much?"

Molly had let the fan fall; she was looking at the speaker, with a scarlet spot on her pale cheek. She had a wild desire to confide in Eve—to tell someone—to get some light on her darkness. And this girl she knew was faithful; the secret would be safe with her for ever.

"Eve," she began in a strangled voice, "I want to tell you something, I want to confide in you. It is driving me mad, I feel as if I must tell someone. Only promise—swear to me that you will not say a word to anyone of what I am going to tell you."

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The angry bitterness died out of Eve's face as the girl spoke in her piteous despairing voice. She came nearer to her, and, bending down, put her arm gently round Molly's shoulders. "What is it, little Molly?" she said. "I can't bear to hear you speak like that, child; I can't bear to see you look like this. Your eyes are heavy and tired and restless, you haven't been sleeping for nights. I know that look. Oh, Molly, you were made for brightness and lightheartedness, my dear, not for care! What is it? What is troubling you?"

"Eve, the diamond! I am wondering if Bertie took it."

The other girl started back from her as if in utter amazement, and her face darkened again. "You foolish child! Oh, Molly, you foolish child!"

"He needed the money desperately, Eve. I can't tell you the whole story, but he had to have £200. It would have meant prison and disgrace if he had not. And before he left he wrote to me that he had got the money, but he could not tell me how. And then, there is worse to follow."

She finished the story of Bethia's confession, whispering in the other's ear. Eve rose thoughtfully then, and paced the floor, her head bent. To tell the truth, the story puzzled her more than she could have allowed. She had never before doubted



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for an instant but that Uncle Geoff had been hanging about in the garden, had taken the diamond, and had escaped that night. Yet as Molly told the story, things did seem a little suspicious. Bertie's departure, too, had struck her as rather odd at the time. It had been so sudden, so unexpected; and now that she thought of it, his look when she entered the drawing-room on the night when she returned from the garden, had been one, indeed, of care and of brooding thought. But light-hearted, shallow Bertie Luttrell! "I don't believe he had enough brains to plan such a thing, and to carry it out successfully," she was meditating now. "I don't believe he had the courage. Besides, he could not have disposed of the diamond so soon. At best he could only have raised money upon it, and that secretly. And it is quite clear that the glazier was Uncle Geoff, and that the broken lock meant Uncle Geoff."

She turned to Molly, finding the girl seated, with anxious and almost haggard eyes fixed on hers.

"You don't answer, Eve; you believe it is true!"

"No, Molly, I don't think I do," the girl answered slowly. "In fact, I am sure that I do not. I don't say but that there are very suspicious circumstances. His sudden engagement to the

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Opera Company may be possible, but it sounded, somehow, rather improbable. Still, of course, a great many improbable things do happen. His being able to pay his debt is curious, but may have quite a natural explanation. As for Bethia's story, I don't know that I should place much credit upon it. Bertie may have gone back into the library again. I don't see exactly why, but he may have gone for some perfectly innocent reason. To tell you the truth, Molly, I don't think Bertie has the brains or the courage to plan a big thing like this. He is weak, but I don't think he is wicked."

"Weak people do desperate things sometimes," Molly said with truth; but the other only shook her head. "I don't think he has done this; I don't think he is a good enough actor. His burst of anger with you, Molly, when I scared you by saying that both he and I had had an opportunity of taking the diamond, was too natural, I think, to be feigned."

It flashed across her mind, however, as she spoke, that on several occasions Master Bertie had rather surprised her by the glibness of his excuses on certain points; and the old puzzle was creeping over her again, when Davida entered the room, saying that Mr. Cameron was downstairs.

"The room is quite warm, Molly. I saw to the



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fire before I came up," Eve said at that. "Put on your new dress and go down and see him."

Molly had risen at once, and had gone to the wardrobe with a bright flush staining her delicate face. She looked round at her cousin as she took out the dress.


"Won't you come too, Eve?"

"Number three, Molly? Oh no, I am going out for a walk. If you manage to keep Mr. Cameron till tea-time, I shall see him then."

She walked resolutely away while Molly was twisting up her dark hair, and when she passed the drawing-room door Neil was standing by the fireplace wondering if that was her step. He thought it was, and his face shadowed as it went past on the tiled hall and did not enter.

When Molly entered the room, he went forward to meet her with both hands outstretched, and drew her gently to the cushioned ingle-neuk. There he ensconced her, and, putting some cushions behind her, stood, looking very big and broad on the bearskin rug. Molly looked up at him with tender eyes, forgetting everything but the pure joy of seeing him again.

"I have been to Edinburgh on business, Molly, or I would have been here before," he said. "I was so sorry to hear from Davida that you had had another attack of bronchitis. How do you get



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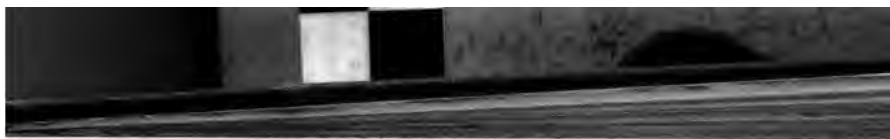
them, little girl? You are looking very much pulled down. Davida said you had not been sleeping well."

"Davida mustn't entertain you with accounts of my ailments," Molly said, trying desperately to speak cheerfully. "I want to hear about your business, Neil, all about yourself. The flowers you sent were lovely; Eve has just been arranging them in my room. She arranges flowers, as she does everything else, beautifully."

He gave a slight nod. He was wondering—and caught himself up for it—where Eve had gone, and why she had not come in even for a moment? Just one glance, he had promised himself, of the beautiful face, of the auburn hair under her black beaver hat. He did not seem very much inclined, Molly saw, to give her any particulars regarding the business in Edinburgh.

"I don't think my business would interest you, Molly," he said, "and I have heard no St. Rule's news since I left. What about this extraordinary theft? Cantyre was in last night, and was telling me about it. He seems quite sure that it was a clever scheme planned by a London thief. What do you think?"

He was not looking at her, or he would have seen that Molly's colour faded, and that her hands clasped themselves in her lap.



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"I—I don't know what to think," she faltered. "It is a horrible thing. Does Lord Cantyre seem very much distressed? I saw him so little. I was ill just after the discovery."

"Distressed? Oh, I think it would take a great deal to distress Cantyre," Cameron said, smiling. "Of course, he is rather furious over it; but he gave me the most ludicrous account of the fire—Davida prone upon the floor, amidst the wreckage of broken dishes, and Bertie and himself as black as sweeps! By the by, what a fortunate thing this engagement is for Bertie! The Professor doesn't mind it, I see. You are not fretting about that, little girl, are you?"

He sat down beside her on the sofa, and Molly leant her head against his arm with bent face. She could not tell Neil; no, she could not bring herself to whisper this dreadful suspicion to him. He was so upright, so honourable, the very breath of such a suspicion would horrify him, and yet how could she deceive him?

"No, I don't think Father minds so very much," she faltered. "I think he had begun to see that Bertie never would have gone in for science; and Father is very busy just now. Sandy is back, and the experiments are going very well. You might look in at the laboratory before you go, Neil; he always likes to see you."

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"Then what is the matter, Molly? No, you need not tell me there is nothing." He put his hand on her shoulder gently, "Can't you tell me? Don't you think I can help you? You know that I would if I could; that I would do anything for you—anything in the wide world."

There was a strange ring of passion in his voice, and yet, oddly enough, something in the tone did not carry the comfort that it should have done to the girl's sensitive ear; she was looking up at him, half-wonderingly. He had never been a man of many words, or of many endearments, their wooing had been very quiet and restrained. He was a true Scot, and could not "heave his heart into his mouth". But somehow, of late, she had had a vague feeling in their interviews that there was something wanting, something lacking—a strange cold want, that brought an ache to her heart, and a hunger, though she had never put these thoughts into words. It only meant that he was busy, she said to herself, absorbed in his work. Science, as she well knew, was utterly absorbing.

"Can't you tell me, Molly?"

"No, Neil."

She might have answered him otherwise, perhaps, if his request had been urged with caresses, with a lover's entreaties. But there was that in



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his manner which vaguely chilled, and threw her back upon herself. He would do anything for her, anything in the world. Why should he say so with such a ring of pain?

In any case she could not tell him; that was all she knew.

He rose and went up to the fire then, and they talked of other things, till Bethia entered with tea; and then Cameron said he would run round to the laboratory. Molly and he parted at the French window, and Neil went out by it to the garden.

Professor Luttrell was busy at the furnace, and Sandy was pounding vigorously with a mortar and pestle, but he paused to look up with much interest when the Professor's visitor entered.

"Glad to see you, Cameron, very glad to see you. You'd find Molly in the drawing-room. How did you think her looking?"

"I didn't think her looking very well," Neil said, shaking hands. "She isn't bothering over anything, is she?"

"Oh, I don't think so. I hope Davida has not been worrying her." The Professor was absently searching in his pocket for something. "Davida worries me a good deal, Cameron, you know. She is a most extraordinary woman, and says quite outrageous things. A case of minerals arrived this morning from Aberdeen—some very fine specimens

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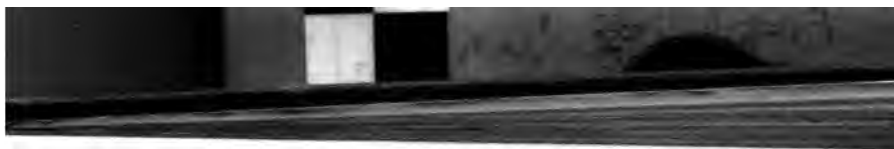
of natrolite from that new quarry—and when she came to me for the money for the carriage, she wanted to know if it was 'something useful', or what she called 'feckless stanes'. She made a great deal of fuss about the charge, which was only ten-and-sixpence, and kept the man wrangling at the door in the cold. Most awkward and annoying! I should like to ask your opinion about this," and he went back to the furnace. "Shut that door, Sandy. You can stay for a little, Cameron, can you not?"

"Not for long, I fear, Professor," Cameron said; "I have some papers to correct. This is a very awkward business about the diamond."

"Yes, yes, of course; most annoying. It was really quite a unique specimen in its way. But I have no doubt it will turn up."

He had gone back to the work-bench, where he was shortly immersed in explaining a new experiment to be introduced to the class on the return of the students from the holidays.

The affair of the diamond, Cameron saw, seemed to have taken little hold of him. He was used to losing things, and having them found and returned to him by Molly or Davida. Yet his indifference puzzled Cameron a little—for Molly was evidently troubled by the loss, deeply troubled, and, he had fancied, chiefly for her father's sake.



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He returned to the question again just before he left, Sandy opening the door politely.

"I suppose you have no theory as to the loss of the jewel, Professor?"

"I — a theory?" The old man looked vague for a moment. "I—I don't know that I have thought much about it, Cameron. It will turn up. Things usually do. I find a great many things in my pockets. But Davida searched all my pockets."

Cameron laughed at this naïve confession. Even Sandy was grinning. "Talking of theories, Cameron," and the Professor suddenly turned round, as if struck by a new idea. "I don't think I ever heard your views on Mendelieff's theory?"

"Very sorry, Professor,"—Cameron was on the step then, and looked back laughingly,—"I fear my views are not worth your consideration."

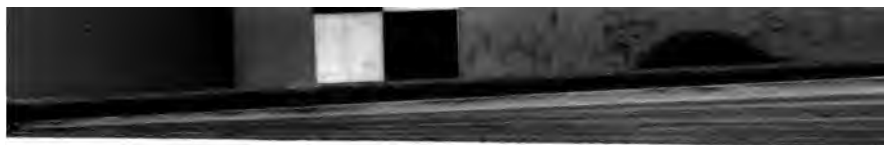
To which the old man—to empty air—made most emphatic dissent.

CHAPTER XVI

Uncle Geoff's Cross-Examination

Eve had said that in these days she avoided the streets and the haunts of her fellow-men, and it was quite true. For St. Rule's was much exercised by the mysterious disappearance of the diamond, and little else was talked of for some time in the town. She had found people so eager for all and every detail of the story, that she had taken refuge in a front of utter ignorance of the whole matter, and had advised Molly to do the same. But Molly as yet was not able to leave her room, and Davida would not hear of her seeing visitors, so that she had escaped what would have been a great ordeal.

On the day following the conversation with her cousin, Eve had gone out, and turned through the ruined archways called "the Pends", and so down by the harbour and the sands to the cliffs, which stretch away in a broken and jagged outline along the coast. She had been there very often, and had come once or twice with Neil Cameron and Molly, Cameron having come to show them a




Uncle Geoff's Cross-Examination

little house built against the rock on one side, some miles along the coast, where he and some friends had once spent a good many nights one summer when geologizing. It was falling to pieces, and in utter disuse now, of course, but was still comparatively weather-tight, and both Eve and Molly had been much interested in it.

"I used to see some grand sunrises from that little bay just below," Cameron had said. "I always could do with very little sleep, so, while the others were snoozing, I used to be out and about. There is very little darkness or night here in June—only a dimmer day."

This was a bright and very clear afternoon, and Eve walked farther than she had meant. She had had a fancy to revisit the little rocky abode, and when she reached the top of the cliff, looking down to the little sandy bay Cameron spoke of, she saw that she had come to the exact spot. It struck her as rather curious to see a fine line of blue smoke coming out from the hole in the turf roof of the hut, and she paused to look round her curiously.

"I believe he did say that wandering tinkers sometimes used the place still," she said to herself. "It must be very cold in this weather. There is the rock where he said he used to sit watching for the sunrise in the night that was only a



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dimmer day. I wonder if I shall be here in June."

She clambered down the cliff then, on to the sands. The sea was blue and crisp, and the sunshine was bright everywhere, though it was very quiet and desolate, and the waves broke with a cold monotonous splash on the firm yellow sands—a wintry sound, unlike the rush and sparkle of a summer sea.

"I don't think I should like to live by the sea," Eve said to herself dreamily, standing on a ledge of rock. "It is so mysterious, so vast and unexplained. There is a kind of terrible force about it—an unknown force. One would always be trying to get at the meaning of it, the secret of the waves and storms. Even that cold monotonous murmur to-day has something sinister in it. What was that?"

She turned and looked back, hearing a sharp exclamation behind her, and then, to her amazement she perceived, standing in the opening of the little rocky hut, the figure of Uncle Geoff! She was so surprised that she stood stock-still, staring at him, and he came hurrying down to meet her, looking, she could see, relieved and pleased. Eve's passionate anger rose as she saw him, and as she remembered Molly's grief and terror. She was thinking, too, of the havoc and misery which might



Uncle Geoff's Cross-Examination

yet be wrought by this man in her own life. He was not done with her.

"How did you find out that I was here?" he said, advancing till he was within a yard of her. "Come and sit down and let us talk. Have you brought anything with you? At least you can tell me what is going on. I want news badly."

"I hadn't the least idea that you were here. I imagined that you were in Amsterdam, engaged in disposing of the diamond," she said icily. "I don't know why you are hiding here, instead of getting away. But had I known, of course, this would have been the last place to which I should have come. I am not accessory to theft."

"Oh, you are going to take that tone again, are you?" he said sharply. "We are going to wash our hands of our disreputable uncle. We are so high and mighty nowadays, and so holy and righteous. Our own little deception having prospered so famously, of course we can afford to turn our back on someone less fortunate."

"I don't know why you refer to yourself as being less fortunate," the girl said coldly, stepping down from the rock and sitting on it with her hands clasped round her knees. The sunshine bathed her figure as she sat, but there was no relenting in her face as she looked at Uncle Geoff, shabby, unwashed, and unshaven. "Since you

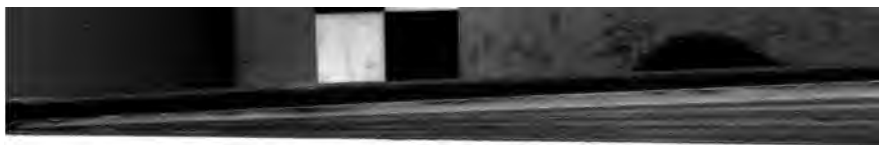
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have got the diamond, why don't you get away? Why do you stay here?"

"Since I have got the diamond! But suppose I have not got the diamond?"

What was he driving at now? What new deception was to be produced for her benefit? Her heart hardened as she heard him.

"For a clever man, Uncle Geoff, I think you occasionally embarrass yourself by needless deception, needless lies," she said coldly. "All needless trouble is a mistake, and you ought to know that; you ought to exercise economy even in lying. I happen to know, you see, that you did take the diamond. Do you really think that when I heard of the glazier who came to replace the broken pane in Professor Luttrell's study, and when, later, we found the broken lock, did you think I should fail to connect these two things with you when the diamond was missing? The only thing that puzzles me now is, why you did not get away that night before the thing became known, and the superintendent had gone down to the station, and every place was watched. They are on the look-out now at St. Rule's for strangers. You were very foolish not to get away before that state of things obtained. St. Rule's—innocent, unsuspecting St. Rule's—is now a nest of suspicion. Suspicion is in the air, and I hear that there is a detective from




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London. It would be very foolish, Uncle Geoff, to have risked so much and to be caught at last."

He had listened to this savagely, but he now spoke with ironical calmness. "I don't intend to be caught, Miss Evangeline Luttrell. I intend to get off, one of these days, by the coast, when things have calmed down a bit, and when you have supplied me with a little money. But meanwhile I want to hear the entire history of the loss of the diamond from you. You may spare me your moral maxims."

"I suppose I may as well tell you"—she stooped to pick up a little pink-and-white shell, and was rolling it about in her hand as she spoke—"the loss of the diamond was discovered immediately after the fire. You, I suppose, were hanging about in the garden. I saw the marks of your feet behind the rockery, and I went out, late at night, and raked them out. I was standing at my window that night, and happened to see someone whom I supposed to be you getting over the wall by the ivy. It was very foolish of you to come again, and I can't make out why you did. You had got what you wanted."

"Oh, you saw me, did you? And you smoothed out my footmarks? That was very kind of you. But supposing I came to take the diamond and found it gone. What then? Supposing I came



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to the library door, thinking to find it open, and found instead that it was most securely fastened. You don't believe that, I see, but it happens to be true. Moreover, I am extremely curious to know who did take the diamond, and I mean to find out from you. I should like to be even with the person."

"I don't know why you take the trouble to invent this farce, Uncle Geoff," the girl said wearily. "It is such an unnecessary story. Since I know so much, why not tell me the truth? I might help you to get away then, as I don't want you to be caught. But why not make a clean breast of it? Why did you not get away that night? Why are you here?"

Something in her words seemed to irritate him furiously, and he stamped his foot on the sand. "Are you no better than a fool?" he cried. "Can't you see that I'm telling you the truth? It is quite true, of course, that I managed the little affair of the door, and that I had made everything ready. But how was I to know that you'd all go rushing away after this fire, or that a fire would take place? How long were you away? And where was the diamond left?"

Eve told him the story then, watching his face keenly as she spoke. He was usually an adept at hiding his emotions, but he was a better actor than



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she gave him credit for, if the amazement and fury which she saw depicted upon his face now, were feigned, and not the real thing. As she looked, she grew more and more bewildered, for Uncle Geoff's passion, when he heard of the opportunity which chance had offered to the thief, was more natural than anything she could have imagined. It was so uncontrollable that even her certainty as to his guilt was shaken.

"And to think that I was not there!" he cried. "To think that it was lying to my hand as it were, and that I was not ready and did not know, and that someone else stepped in before me! I had everything arranged. I would have been safe in Holland by now."

"Then you did come over the wall at night, Uncle Geoff, to find the diamond gone?" she said slowly. "Is that true?"

"It is perfectly true. I was too late."

"Then why don't you go away now?"

"I wanted to find out about it," he cried angrily. "All I knew was that the door was locked, and as there was a light in a window upstairs, I did not dare make a noise with my tools outside. Next morning I was hiding behind the ivy in that little round turret on the Abbey wall, round in the Provost's Garden, when I heard people talking of the story as they walked past. Of course I only

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heard scraps of conversation, but nearly everyone was full of it, and I began to put two and two together. Then I heard that the superintendent was on the look-out for all strangers, and that a glazier was suspected. I dared not go to the station. I was afraid of staying on in the summer-house. That did all very well for a night or two, for no one was suspicious, but it might be a bit dangerous after the thing was known. So I got away, and meant to walk to one of these fishing villages on the coast. But I came across this house, and as it seemed pretty weather-tight, I stayed here. I have walked into the next village and bought provisions after nightfall, but I must get away, and you must help me. The whole thing has been a disgusting failure."

Was this to be believed, or was it a new trick? She had seen and known so much of Uncle Geoff, and his marvellous power of lying, that she hesitated still to believe him, though the truth of what he said was fast persuading her. Yet if not he, who, then, had taken the diamond? She looked at him closely.

"But if you are innocent, Uncle Geoff, why should you fear to be caught?"

"Because I don't wish to be brought before any court of law, or to come into contact with the police at all," he said surlily. "That is all I care



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to tell you. There is a saying which remarks that in seeking one thing we generally come across another. The police might find that in my case, —you can apply it as you please.”

“But if it was not you, who could have taken the stone?” She spoke the words slowly and half-absently, and Uncle Geoff raised his head, at once alert.

“That is exactly what I am asking myself,” he said. “I’d give a good deal to know. But you have your wits about you, and you know the inside working of the house. Come now, tell me who they were. Let us work it out a bit.”

“Professor Luttrell was in the coach-house, showing his minerals to Mr. Marsland, the New Zealand man; they heard nothing of the fire, and so stayed there till after Molly Luttrell and I had returned to the drawing-room. In the kitchen, at the time of the fire, there were the two servants, Bertie Luttrell, Lord Cantyre, Molly, and myself”

“And the diamond, you say, was left lying on the table in the library? Lying alone, like one of these shells in the sand at your feet, for anyone to pick up? Oh, my goodness me! It’s enough to make a man gnash his teeth! A pretty set of imbeciles you were!”

“Yes, it was left lying on the library table.

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Lord Cantyre had been rolling it to and fro on the cloth."

"And it hadn't rolled into a corner? You are quite sure of that? It can't be there now, Eve, and all this fuss for nothing?" He grew quite pale at the thought.

"No, it could not. We all looked, and Davida looked, and that is saying everything; for Davida would find a pin in a haystack."

"But you didn't all stay in the kitchen all the time? You went rushing about the house?"

"I left the kitchen," Eve said slowly, "to get smelling-salts for Davida, who had fainted; the housemaid, Bethia, went, I think, on her way to summon the fire-engine, and Bertie Luttrell went up to the attic to look for old garden-hose."

"Bertie Luttrell? What sort of a youth is he?"

Eve paused before she answered this query, and she looked down on the fine yellow sand at her feet. She knew, of course, if she spoke, to what conclusions Uncle Geoff would immediately come, and she was not at all sure that it would be wise to direct his suspicions into this channel. Was she herself beginning to believe that it was the right one? What else could she think? If not Bertie, who could have taken the diamond? And yet, was it possible that it could be he?



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"He is quite an honest boy," she said slowly, "it is not likely that he could have done it. A boy in his position, brought up like that, would never dream of such a thing. Besides, his manner—he was quite open and candid on the subject, quite furious at the very notion of suspicion."

"Oh, then he was suspected?"

"Not that I know of. I think it was I who said that either he or I might have had an opportunity of taking it."

"But there was this servant-girl."

"An ignorant servant-girl! No, that would be quite impossible. She would never have dreamt of such a thing."

"Unless she were working for someone else. This is a deep business, Eve, depend upon it. It has been a deeply-laid scheme. She may be the tool of someone else who laid his plans with care."

"I don't agree with you, Uncle Geoff; no one could have anticipated the fire," the girl said slowly. "I think myself that the theft must have been the result of sudden temptation—the consequence of the curiously easy opportunity."

She spoke slowly. Somehow everything they said seemed to close the circle round Bertie. Suppose that he had gone to the library and been suddenly tempted to take the diamond? Why

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should he look guilty when Bethia met him coming out? Why should he give her money when he left? And if Molly, who knew him, could be thrown into such an agony of doubt and fear! After all, what did she, Eve, know of him? Besides, there was his manner! He could not have feigned that manner, Eve thought, and yet it might be possible. He might be more clever, deeper, than she thought. Now that she was putting link and link together, she remembered that when she had come in from the garden that night his attitude had been one of deep, brooding thought; care and anxiety and trouble were written on his face. The face he had lifted to hers had been a face of care. Was the thief Bertie?

"Do you think, if it was he, that he would know how to dispose of the diamond?" she said slowly. "You, of course, had that man in Amsterdam, and knew, as it were, the ropes. But this thief, whoever he was, surely it would be very difficult for him to dispose of a stone like that?"

"He could not do it in England nor in Scotland—that is all I can say. Where is this Bertie Luttrell?"

"He left for London next day; he is sailing for the States."

"Left for London!" Uncle Geoff cried. "Sailing



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for the States! That is a peculiar story. How did he get away?"

She gave the details, and Uncle Geoff laughed aloud savagely.

"I never heard a feebler tale! Do you mean to say that they swallowed that?"

"I never heard it doubted."

"And this man — this detective that they brought down, have you heard his name?"

"Hush! Who is that?"

Eve turned round; she could see a tall figure climbing the cliff path above them. It was Neil Cameron; she did not think he had seen them yet.

"Go into the house," she said rapidly, "it is someone I know. I don't want to be seen talking to you. Go into the house, I shall try to come back."

He obeyed her at once, and in a few moments Eve was left, a solitary figure standing on the rock.

Cameron had stopped to look out over the sea, and then his eye caught sight of her, and with a stifled exclamation he came down the cliff path and on to the sands.



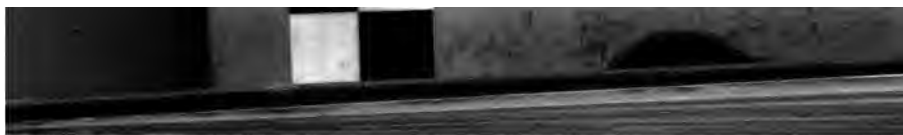
CHAPTER XVII

What about Marsland?

She turned round with strangely mingled feelings. She would have liked to conclude her interview with Uncle Geoff, and she did not wish Cameron to see him, and yet, above all this, there was a rush of such keen pleasure in her heart that it was almost pain. She had tried hard not to think of him, or to think of him only as Molly's property, but her errant thoughts now could only dwell upon the realization that he was here, and that the sunshine was bright upon the sea—that the keen sweet wind was in their faces, and that it was a long walk back, clambering over the rocks to where the ruined towers jutted out into the bay. The present, just this little bit of golden present, would be theirs—together!

"You are far from home to-day," Cameron said as they shook hands. He had given one of his swift glances at the beautiful face, and then he looked away seaward. "Have you been as far as the Buddo Rock?"

"I meant to go as far," she said, "but I think



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I must leave that for another day, later, when the primroses are out; Molly and I have planned all sorts of expeditions then."

He nodded his head. "How is Molly?"

"Her cold is better, but she is still looking very delicate," she said. "Molly is delicate, I think, yet no one seems to notice except Davida."

Cameron did not speak for a moment. They had turned now, and were walking slowly up the sands, and past the little rock hut.

"I think she is worrying about this diamond," he said slowly. "At least that is my idea. I was thinking about it all just now coming along the cliffs. Do you know, Miss Luttrell, that I have a theory that we have all been on the wrong tack, and that the detective is now on the wrong tack."

Eve stopped instinctively just beside the crazy and lean-to door, which she saw had been left a chink open. "What tack is the detective on?" she asked. "I have heard no particulars since Lord Cantyre went to Edinburgh."

"I fancy he is still pursuing the idea that the scheme emanated from London—that the thief was a London one, and that he is in hiding somewhere not far off. I think he is wrong; I begin to think that the theft was committed not from the outside, but from the inside of the house.

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It may be quite a wrong notion, and I would not mention my suspicions to anyone yet, but I thought I would just put the case to you. If it is worrying Molly—as I am sure it is—I should like to see it cleared up."

"What do you mean by 'from inside'?" Eve said eagerly. She had turned away from the hut then, and they were walking up the steep rocky path. "You mean that you suspect someone in the house?"

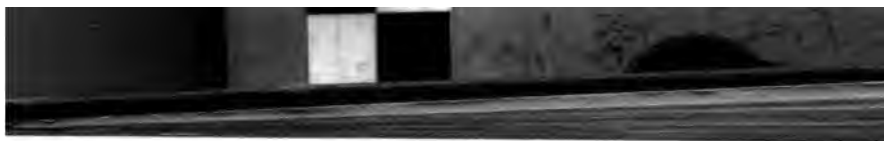
They had reached the top of the cliff; she was glad to be safely past Uncle Geoff's abode, and to see that Cameron had not seemed to notice or to remember it at all. He seemed absorbed in thought. Eve looked up at the grave face, wondering what would come next.

"Well, there is a very small circle of people. Let me name them on my fingers."

Was he going to suspect Bertie? Somehow she did not think so; his tone was too thoughtful, too earnest and considering. And yet what possible clue could be in his mind, save that one?

"The only three people who left the kitchen," she said, "were Bertie Luttrell, Bethia, and myself."

"I think we can dismiss those three very easily." Cameron smiled, stooping to break away a long whin branch which stretched before her on the



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path. "It was not any of those three. But you forget there were others in the house."

"There was Davida, prone upon the kitchen floor amongst the crockery," Eve said, "you can't suspect her; nor can you suspect Molly, and I don't suppose Cantyre wanted to steal his own diamond."

"Yes, but you are confining yourself entirely to that side of the house. You forget that the Professor and Mr. Marsland were in the coach-house, closer to the diamond than any of you."

"But you can't possibly mean—you can't mean the Professor? Though he does put everything into his pocket!" Eve said, standing still in her amazement. "What do you mean, Mr. Cameron? And Mr. Marsland! If Mr. Marsland had wanted to steal the diamond, he could have made off with it before!"

"Well, I don't know. You see, he had given up the stone—it was no longer in his charge. I'll tell you what put the idea into my head."

They were walking on again by the winding path, while the sunshine grew dimmer over the sea, and the rocks, looking black and jagged and cruel, stretched out in long sinuous lines before them into the gray water.

"I was in the coach-house one day with the Professor — one afternoon," Cameron resumed.

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"He was washing a mineral at that sink he has in the corner, his back towards me. He was telling me about a new vein of serpentine lately discovered, and when he stopped for a moment I heard Molly calling, and went from the library to the drawing-room. I was away fully half an hour, and when I came back he was still conversing with me, perfectly unconscious of the fact that I had left the room! He never expects any answer, he rarely turns round. He would stand before a drawer, poring over his minerals, and describing each specimen, quite blissful, and apparently careless as to whether you answered him or no. Now, it just strikes me that it would have been quite possible for Marsland to have gone back to the library and taken the diamond, without the Professor being aware that he had left the room! This is merely a theory, but I have wondered if it has struck anyone else. He was known to be in charge of the diamond before—at this point he had given it up."

Was this possible? Eve considered, thinking deeply.

"What sort of a man is Mr. Marsland?" she enquired then. "You know it was he who first noticed the loss of the diamond. He seemed to me perfectly straightforward. Of course he was very cool over it, but I took that to be his manner."



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No, I don't think you are right," and she looked at him intently; "I fear it is not a feasible notion."

"But the thief is to be found somewhere. Of course you will say that there was the broken lock, but on working the thing out, it struck me that it was just possible that the person who meant to steal the diamond did not do so—that he was forestalled! That was an idea which struck me too, and you see that narrows the circle."

"Yes, of course it does."

She was wondering that he had never for an instant even mentioned Bertie's name; yet he must know of Bertie's escapades, Bertie's extravagance. Davida had even told her that he had helped the Professor's son out of not a few scrapes.

"I sometimes wonder that no one suspects me," she said, turning then with a light laugh. "After all, what does anyone know of me, an unknown girl coming here from the States? Everyone knows, too, that I am badly off, and people will do anything for money nowadays. I am not sure but that I would do anything for money."

"I don't believe that," he said slowly, waiting for her to pass him on a narrow piece of the cliff. "I should have thought you extremely careless as to the value of money; you always seemed to me to speak very slightly of it."

"That's because I have not got it. I don't

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really think slightly of it at all. Money rules the world, Mr. Cameron, as you know, and is the golden key to unlock every door. I have never been greatly tempted by it," she said more slowly. "If I were tempted, I should, I think, yield to the temptation at once. You think that I am jesting, but you don't know me."

He did not, in fact, quite know what to make of her, whether she spoke in jest or earnest. There was a bitter ring in her tone, though her lips smiled, and he winced as he heard; there was something rather hopeless in her voice. It was all such a wild pain, mingled with so keen a delight, to walk with her there, to count guiltily upon the mile that still lay before them—they two alone with the sea and the rocks! How he would have liked to ask more, to probe her thoughts, her heart!

"But I did not take the diamond," Eve remarked lightly then, "so we need not discuss that. Could you not find out about Mr. Marsland? For Molly's sake, for everyone's sake. We ought to get the detective put on the right track. After all, I think it is only in fiction that detectives are clever, don't you?"

"I think I can find out a little about Marsland, in a quiet way," Cameron said, as if pondering. "Cantyre told me that he was in Edinburgh, visit-



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ing some people in Merchiston, and I happen to know them. I could easily make a few enquiries about him, but you will not, of course, mention this, even to Molly."

"I will not say whom you suspect," Eve said; and then they talked of other things, dismissing the subject of the diamond.

They came down upon the sands at last. The light had all gone, and there was only a faint after-glow in the west, which tinged the sea, but left the rocks in darkness, a jagged edge here and there catching a dull coppery tint.

Eve had looked back as they had left the cliffs, and Cameron wondered if he had read her look aright. Had the walk been to her what it had been to him? He dared not ask himself the question.

They passed by the Cathedral gates and through the old street to the top of the lane, bidding a silent good-night there, and then Eve walked home. She went to Molly's room at once, where her cousin looked up to say she had been "quite anxious".

"I knew you were alone on the cliffs, Eve, and the path is dangerous in parts. It was growing dark too."

"You need not have been uneasy about me, Molly," Eve said, taking off her things; "I know

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very well how to take care of myself. And, besides, I met Neil Cameron; he walked home with me."

"Oh, was Neil there?" There was a faint ring of disappointment in Molly's voice. "I had hoped that he would have come in this afternoon. What did you talk about, Eve?"

There was a curiously dull tone in her voice, a little latent pain, which struck the other as if with some faint accusation.

"Only about the diamond, Molly. What does anyone ever talk of now, but that hateful piece of stone?" She spoke with sudden passion, turning round from the mirror. "It is a torment to us all. Look at your own case, Molly. I believe you are thinking of that wretched jewel night and day. It has got between you and peace, between you and sleep."

"Eve, I cannot help it. I cannot get it out of my head!"

"That is what I say. But you must, Molly, because, after all, I believe you are on the wrong tack altogether. Neil Cameron says you are."

"Eve, you did not tell him?"

"No, of course not. He dismissed Bertie at once. But he has an idea that it might be someone else. I dare say he will tell you later, more than he told me."



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Molly was too absorbed in the relief the suggestion of another possible thief gave her to feel hurt for a moment at the thought that Cameron had confided in Eve what he had not mentioned to her.

"Someone else!" she repeated thoughtfully. "You mean the person who broke the lock?"

"Well, no, I don't. Oh, Molly, the thing is in a circle, and I believe we are all fighting the air!" the girl cried. "Do you know what I said to Neil? I said, why did no one suspect me."

Molly laughed at that, as if it were a jest. The tension of her face was easier, her heart felt already lightened by her cousin's words. Anyone but Bertie, she told herself, anyone but he!

"You laugh at that, Molly, but after all, what do you know of me?" the other said suddenly. "You think you know me very well, but you do not."

Molly looked back at the face, half-hidden in the shadows of the flickering fire. She had not drawn down the blinds, and she could see the age-worn and broken walls of the chapel with the empty mullioned windows framing the dark.

"I know that I love you," was all she said, simply, "and that I would trust you with the most precious thing I have in the world."

"Oh, Molly!"

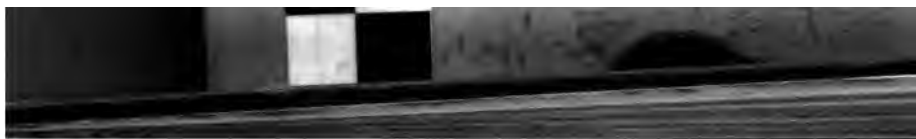
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Something stung her hearer so deeply in those innocent words that she turned away completely, and, leaning her arm upon the window, looked out into the darkness. The moon had just risen, bursting through a soft wrack of clouds, and it lit the one broken shaft of the Cathedral seen between the great lime-tree and the end of the chapel. Everything was very peaceful, utterly quiet. Molly was saying she would trust her with the most precious thing she had in the world. The most precious thing, Eve knew, in Molly's life, was Cameron's love! If she could have known the truth about them both—how they had walked along the cliffs that afternoon, an unforgettable walk for each, with a guilty gladness in either heart! Anyone could have heard their conversation, but if Molly had looked up, as she had done, to find his eyes resting on her face—if she could have read that look, as she had read it!

"Molly will kill me! She stabs me, with words like these!" the girl wailed to herself. "I will be true to her, whatever happens! Oh, Molly, I must be true!"

She had made no reply, except that faint exclamation, and by and by she slipped out of the room and went to her own, where she sank down by the window.

"To think that there have been moments when



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I have said to myself that I could take him from her—that after all, he could never have loved her, that it was all a mistake, and that he and I were made for each other! I have said to myself that I would win him, that I would make him forget Molly and his best ideals. I have never shown him that I love him; surely if I showed him, he could not help himself!”

Her mind went groping to and fro—a temptation, deemed vanquished, had her in its grasp once more. She began to summon up airy visions in which Molly had no part. The bliss of seeing Cameron’s face when she told him that not only he had been tempted—the happiness of yielding to their love, of forgetting all but love!

“Yet Uncle Geoff would say that it would only last for five minutes. I have heard that there is only about five minutes’ perfect happiness in every life. But I have not had mine, and I would risk much for it,” she said to herself despairingly. “For a little, even for a little, we could be perfectly happy!”

And then the pointing finger went on remorselessly, and she saw another picture: A life of deceit, a curtain always drawn, a day which would surely come eventually, when he would find out the truth, and would compare the devious paths of her life with Molly’s truth and rectitude. If there were a

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day of perfect happiness, there would also be a dark day of reckoning and of knowledge. Would the one be worth the other?

"I believe it would," Eve said. "I have been lonely and tempest-tossed all my life, and Cameron's love would be a haven. Molly would get over it, all girls get over such things. I don't believe that little Molly has what Cameron called 'a genius for suffering', and I have."

There was silence in the little room, which Molly's care and affection had made so comfortable. Outside, a robin was singing on the laburnum-tree, whose long branches swept the path by the privet hedge. She had never known peace or rest or happiness, the warm atmosphere of love and home, till she had come there. How Molly and the Professor had taken her to their hearts, trusting her so implicitly that none of the "gray fibs" she had so carefully prepared had ever been necessary!

"I would trust you with the greatest treasure of my heart."

The words came to her mind again and again, like the refrain of a song. She could hear the accents of Molly's low voice, "that excellent thing in woman". It was a voice which had never expressed anything but love for her. But Molly had changed of late, and there had been a shadow over



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her face. Was Eve to deepen the shadow, to darken it there for ever?

She threw up the window suddenly, and leaned her head out into the night.

“I am not in the habit of praying,” she said to herself desperately, “and I don’t see how we can expect to be answered when we only pray once in a way, only when we are in desperate need. It seems cowardly, somehow. No, Molly, some day perhaps you will cast me off for ever, but I don’t think I can rob you of your dearest treasure—even for the sake of my five minutes!”

CHAPTER XVIII

Cameron owns his Mistake

Molly and her cousin had been to church, and when they came out of the carved gateway, after the service was over, they found Neil waiting for them, and evidently ready to walk back. He was very glad to see that Molly was able to be out again, and Eve purposely lingered a little behind, letting the two lovers precede her on the narrow pavement till the house was reached. There they found the Professor in the drawing-room, roaming about dejectedly. He had let the library fire go out in the afternoon, and Davida had entered, to find a black grate, a freezing atmosphere, and his tea and scone untasted at his elbow. Her wrath and solicitude had been freely and vigorously expressed, and the old man had been banished to the drawing-room while she re-lit the fire. He told the story rather aggrievedly to Cameron, who assured him of his deep sympathy.

“ You see, my dear fellow, I can’t work here, and I have just had some new slides from Professor Faulkner. I had not nearly finished them when Davida




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came in. It is really very provoking of Davida; I am almost tempted to wish sometimes"—and the Professor gave an apologetic little laugh—"that she were really not quite so concerned about my comfort. To hear her talk, you would think that to omit to drink a cup of afternoon tea—after all, I consider it rather an unnecessary waste of time—were the most heinous possible crime! I had eaten a good lunch—at least I think I had eaten a good lunch—and I really wasn't at all so very cold. She said I had eaten nothing! I don't see how she knew. Molly, my dear, I'm sure I ate very heartily at lunch?"

"No, Daddy, I'm afraid I can't give you absolution," Molly said, shaking her head at him. "You only took two spoonfuls of soup, and then you went off to speak to Sandy in the laboratory. I thought you meant to come back, and Davida thought you had finished, so between us you were allowed to stay with Sandy. That is why it was so reprehensible of you to go without your tea."

Checkmated thus, the Professor said no more then, only going to and fro to the library door to see if Davida were still there, or if the coast were clear.

Eve had gone to take off her things, and when she returned she found Cameron alone in the drawing-room. Molly had left him for a little to give



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orders about supper, and the Professor was back at his microscope, having already forgotten the fact that Cameron was present.

Eve hesitated at the door for a moment. She had not meant to find Cameron alone; but there seemed nothing for it but to enter, and he had advanced as if he had something to say.

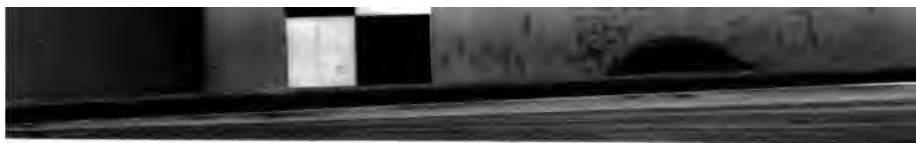
"I wanted to tell you that I have been to Edinburgh," he said, rather low, as Eve sat down in the ingle-neuk, and put a pale-yellow cushion behind her head.

"You mean that you have been following up your theory as to Mr. Marsland. I have felt relieved, somehow, ever since you spoke of it, though I don't know why I should wish to convict the New Zealander. Well, what have you discovered?"

"I think I was quite wrong," Cameron said, his elbow on the mantel-shelf. "I think I was utterly and egregiously wrong."

Eve's face fell; she leaned forward, her hands clasped. "Are you sure?"

"My friends in Edinburgh knew Marsland, and while I was there we had an invitation to dinner at the house at which he was staying. I had a long talk with him after dessert, when the ladies were gone; a very interesting talk. He is a most delightful man, full of information and very in-



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telligent. I should say he was clear as crystal, absolutely incapable of deceit, the last person on earth who would commit a theft or play a part. It would be impossible for him to play a part; one could not connect him with deceit of any kind. It would be abhorrent to him."

Eve's mobile face seemed to stiffen a little as she listened, and her lips hardened.

"And you made sure of this all in one night, Mr. Cameron? I should say you must be a lightning judge of character. How is it possible that you could make sure of so much in one night?"

Something in the slight harshness of her tone seemed to surprise him, and he looked at her as if rather taken aback.

"Don't you think that we can judge people, after all, pretty rapidly. At least, it seems to me that we divide people instinctively into two classes. Those to whom scheming and deceit are impossible, and those of whom we are not sure. Perhaps the first class is rather a small one, but I should put Marsland into it without any hesitation. There are people, I think, whose honesty is written large on their faces, to whom lying lips would be an abomination. He, I think, is one."

"'Lying lips, and a shadow of deceit!' You have a horror, of course, of both those crimes," she said, laughing rather irrelevantly. "You

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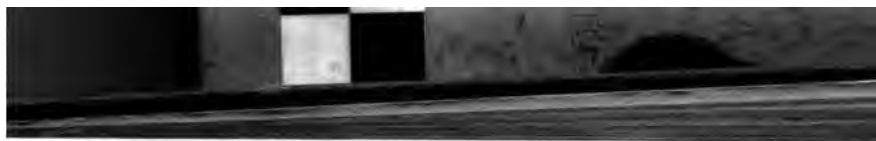
would make a good judge, Mr. Cameron. I expect the prisoner at the bar would receive scant mercy at your hands; it would be all justice, bare justice. And bare justice is such an admirable thing. You Scots love it, don't you?"

The surprise seemed to deepen in his face as he heard. Why should she speak so personally? With a ring in her voice, as it seemed to him, of bitterness and woe? What had all this to do with Marsland? Seeing his look, the girl appeared to recover herself, and she laughed, taking another cushion and putting it behind her.

"But I don't know why I am branching into side issues like this; since you are quite sure that Mr. Marsland is an individual to whom a gray lie would be an impossibility, and a polite fib something too terrible to contemplate, I suppose there is nothing more to be said. Did you speak about the diamond?"

"Yes, we discussed it fully. Marsland has an idea that they sent a very stupid man down here, and that he is not making the progress he might. As yet he seems to have done absolutely nothing. Marsland said he was coming to poke Cantyre up about it; Cantyre is such an easy-going individual."

"You think he wants to be stirred up? Well, I suppose you and Mr. Marsland could effectually



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manage that between you. Only, perhaps the detective isn't so stupid as you think. For all you know he may— Ah, here is Molly!"

She changed the subject deftly then, and managed, after supper, to return with the Professor to the library, where she coaxed him into showing her some of his beautiful agates, while the other two sat by the drawing-room fire. The Professor found her a most intelligent listener; his niece was a very sympathetic girl, he thought. He confided to her that he had been annoyed with Sandy again. Sandy seemed a perpetual thorn in his side.

"I am saying nothing to Davida about it, and as yet she has not discovered that he has gone," he confided, in rather a low voice. "He was here this forenoon to say that he was going to Edinburgh to attend the funeral of a relative in Leith. He has left me at a most inopportune time. I gave him an advance on his wages—of course you won't mention that?—and he promised to return when his mother—or I think it was his grandmother—was buried. I hope Sandy was not prevaricating." The Professor pushed up his spectacles unconsciously. "I never heard before that he had either a mother or a grandmother. Should you think, my dear, that he had invented them, and the funeral? Perhaps it is wrong of me to be so suspicious."

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"I haven't the faintest doubt that he is capable of inventing anything," said Eve. "Sandy always strikes me as being quite a past master in the art of lying. He seems to embellish his stories as if from the pure love of it. Dear me, how dreadful! It would shock our friend next door. 'Lying lips'—he was quoting the words only to-night—are such an abomination to him."

She had nodded towards the drawing-room; the Professor, happening to be looking at her at the moment, was struck by something strange and cold and new in her expression. He had always thought that she liked Cameron, that everyone liked Cameron; why should Eve speak of him thus? Somehow the tone jarred, and the brilliant eyes were not happy.

"But Cameron is not a hard man at all, my dear," he said gently. "I remember once, when Sandy had stolen a good deal of methylated spirits, and Davida found it out, and would not hear of my taking him back, Cameron stood his friend, and got him some odd jobs to do with Arundel at the College. I thought, my dear, that you liked Cameron."

"So I do, Professor, so I do." She turned to take up a beautiful agate and hold it to the light. "Look at this! It is like a twilight sea with a band of pale gold low in the horizon. I never



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knew stones could be pictures. You must cheer up about Sandy; I have no doubt he will return soon. Mr. Forret is like the poor, he will be always with us. I am quite sure he finds no one so indulgent as you."

"But you won't mention this, neither to Davida, my dear, nor to anyone. I mean about the grandmother?" he said ingratiatingly. And Eve laughed and gave him her promise. She did not see Cameron again till he came into the library to say good-night.

The agates were all-absorbing, and she kept the old man by her side.

CHAPTER XIX

The Detective's Theory

"Lord Cantyre is in the drawing-room, Miss Eve, to see you."

Eve turned round sharply from the window. "You must mean, to see Miss Molly. Where is she, Bethia?"

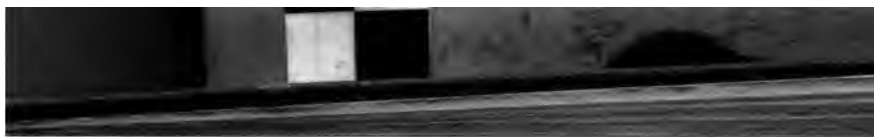
"Miss Molly went out, miss; and, besides, his lordship asked for you, 'Miss Eve Luttrell' he said."

"Oh, very well!"

"So he is back!" she said to herself, going up to the mirror to take a comb and run it through the thick curling sweep of her hair. "I wonder why he wants to see me. I wonder if anything more has turned up."

Cantyre was standing on the bear-skin rug, and he advanced to meet her with so much eagerness that the girl could not help smiling. After all, she supposed no woman could object to such open admiration and adoration.

"I called yesterday, but you were all out, and I only saw the Professor in the laboratory," he



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said, after they had shaken hands. "I only got back from Edinburgh yesterday, and this morning I had to go to classes. I have been longing to see you; if I hadn't thought you might have been angry I would have written. Would you have been angry?"

"At receiving letters? No, I am rather fond of letters," the girl said lightly. "But I am a wretched correspondent, and you would have had no answer, Lord Cantyre."

His face fell a little at that. "You are looking awfully well," he said. "St. Rule's suits you, at all events. Is Miss Luttrell better?"

"Yes, Molly is out and about again. I dare say she will be back presently. Won't you sit down?"

"I can always talk better when I am standing or walking about," he said. "So, if you don't mind, I won't. Besides, I have got something very particular to say to you."

His manner changed then, and his expression grew serious, almost anxious. "I do hope you won't be angry with me. After all, it isn't my view a bit. I think the man's an ass, and I told him so, only not quite in those words."

"What man?" Eve said. "I don't know what you are talking about, Lord Cantyre; but if it is something private and particular, you had better

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get it over, because I expect Molly back to tea at any moment."

"Yes, and I want to tell you before she comes. It is about this wretched diamond."

Eve drew her breath at that. "Has he found out anything?" she asked abruptly. "I have wondered—all St. Rule's has wondered—that nothing seems to have transpired. We expected him to come down, take the case up, and after a little dramatic pause, to spot the criminal at once. But he seems to have done nothing. I do not even hear of his having been seen going about."

"Well, you would not, you know, for he hasn't been here," Cantyre said, pacing to and fro with his hands behind his back, and only pausing before her every now and then when he was more than usually emphatic. "He has been in Oxford, making enquiries there. He only got back yesterday."

"In Oxford?"

Her mind flew at a tangent then, to Bertie, and she looked at the young man anxiously, determined to make him speak. "What was he doing there? What on earth had Oxford to do with the diamond and St. Rule's? It is a 'far cry'!"

"Well, I must tell you all about it," he said. "It is just this. He has got it into his head that the person to suspect is Bertie Luttrell. He questioned the servant, you know, and found out



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that Luttrell left the kitchen during the fire, and was gone some time. He says he is sure the maid Bethia was hiding something. Then he wanted to know the kind of fellow Luttrell was, and after hearing a bit or two of St. Rule's gossip, he was off to Oxford. He said at once that Luttrell's going off like that should have been prevented, that it was very suspicious; but of course he could not stop him then, he had nothing definite to go on. As I told him, he has nothing definite to go on now, but he says it looks like a bad case."

"What does?" Eve said, still determined to betray nothing. "What has he found out at Oxford?"

"Well, it seems that Luttrell has been a bit wild." Lord Cantyre was very good-natured, and he spoke with much reluctance. He had not greatly cared for Bertie, but he was Eve's cousin, and, after all, this was a serious accusation.

"He has played high, and there were College rumours that he had got into a baddish scrape and wanted money—a good round sum. Smyth, the detective, wormed all this out, and then he finally discovered that the scrape, whatever it was, had been got out of, and, as far as that was concerned, Luttrell was free. It did look a bit suspicious. Don't mind my saying so, because I really don't believe he did it. I only mean that from the

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detective's point of view it looked suspicious, for Smyth says that he sent off a very large cheque the very day after the theft. His opinion is that several people have been concerned, and that Luttrell may not yet have passed off the diamond; but he thinks that he has raised money on it, and that it is with him in the States now."

There was dead silence after this. Eve turned her head, fancying that she heard a movement in the inner room, which was separated from the drawing-room by folding-doors. It seemed to be nothing, however, and she brought her mind back to bear upon the story.

"What are you going to do, Lord Cantyre?"

"That's just what I wanted to consult you about," he said eagerly, coming over to her with a little chair, which he placed near the ingle-neuk. "I hope you will help me. You are awfully clever, I know that, and you will tell me the right thing to do. I told Smyth he was not to go a step farther till he heard from me; I can't bear to do anything. The least breath of this will fly through the place like wildfire. Of course, Smyth has held his tongue to all but me. You see, I can't bear to let him go on and take proceedings; it would be dreadful for everyone concerned, for the poor old Professor and for your cousin. What do you think I should do?"



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He had turned round towards her then, his hand on the back of his chair, his handsome, eager face upraised to hers. As he looked, he forgot the diamond. He only remembered the face above him.

"Eve," he whispered suddenly, "you know I would do anything for you, anything in the wide world. You can't think how you have haunted me while I have been away. You were so cool and careless to me, you laughed at me so much, that I tried to forget you; I own that I did. But I could not. The more I tried, the more you haunted me. I dreamed of you at night—"

"I seem to have been a kind of nightmare," the girl said lightly. "But I am very sorry for you, Lord Cantyre, if I am half as bad a nightmare to you as I am to myself—"

"No, don't push me off like that!" he cried. "I want you to believe me. Oh, Eve, I love you! don't you believe that? I'm not clever, I know; but you could make me do anything. Won't you think of it? Can't you think of it?"

"What I want to think of at present," she said, "is what you are to do about this. You must give me time. You are quite sure that no one, save yourself, knows this man Smyth's views?"

"No, no one knows," the earl said dejectedly. It was hard to be brought back to the diamond

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again when he would much rather have talked of other things. "But won't you tell me if there is any hope for me? Just the least little tiny bit of hope? There isn't anyone else, is there?"

Eve had risen then, and she went over to the French window, presumably to draw down the blind.

"No, there is no one else," she said coldly, "if that is any comfort to you; and as to hope— No, you mustn't come near me, Lord Cantyre, for I hear Davida coming with tea."

He persisted, however, and was standing close beside her when Davida entered.

"What about hope, Miss Luttrell?" he persisted, in her ear.

"Davida is a very hopeful person. Ask her. She revels in depicting the sunny side of life, don't you, Davida?" the girl cried wickedly. "Isn't there an old saying, Davida, that 'as long as there is life there is hope'?"

His face had brightened at this little crumb of comfort, and Davida, looking at them both, put down the tea-tray and straightened the cloth. She regarded all this as philandering. Eve, she knew, was given to what she summed up generally as "havers".

"Mebbe you'll be getting the Professor to come in till his tea, Miss Eve," she said stiffly. "I have



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sent Bethia, but he says he is ower busy, Sandy being awa'. There's ae thing that I hope, and that is that I'll never see Forret's face again. That's a' the hope I'm concerned wi' the noo."

Eve laughed at that, undoing the fastening of the French window.

"I'll bring the Professor, Davida, and you had better entertain Lord Cantyre with the tale of Sandy's enormities. I know that will amuse him till I come back. But why did you bring tea when Miss Molly isn't in?"

"Miss Molly came in twenty minutes syne," Davida said, preparing to leave the room. "I saw her pass the kitchen. I've nae time tae gang ower onybody's 'enormities' the noo."

CHAPTER XX

Eve Paves the Way

"Molly! Molly, are you there?"

There was no answer for a moment, and then Molly turned round from the window. Eve exclaimed at the pallor of her face, the distended terror of her soft eyes. She came forward slowly, and, putting out her hand, drew her cousin gently into the room and then shut the door. The two girls looked into each other's faces for a moment without speaking. "Eve," Molly said in a stifled voice, "I was in the ante-drawing-room and I heard! They suspect Bertie! They will accuse him! It will break my father's heart!"

"It is more likely to break yours," Eve said. She spoke intentionally in rather a matter-of-fact voice, for she could see that the only way to meet the tension of Molly's mood was to betray no fear, nor even express much affection.

"We could easily keep it from your father. He is as good as a hermit in a cell, Molly, my dear. But we are not going to break anyone's heart, I hope. After all, Molly, broken hearts went out



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with the early Victorians—with heroines in white muslin and blue ribands, and Amelia Sedleys! with fainting-fits, and hoops and patches and crinolines! Nowadays we—‘we mend our hearts handsomely,’ as poor Sir Walter said. Come, sit down here and let us talk the matter over; nothing is so bad once it is fairly discussed.”

Molly listened, and her look gradually grew less strained. Eve had spoken purposely, very carelessly, without any betrayal of her real feelings.

“You are so strong,” Molly whispered. “I feel as if you could help me. Oh, Eve, I think my father would die of the shame of it!”

“You ought to know your brother better than I, Molly,” the other began slowly then. “So, as you seem so sure he took the diamond, I suppose the only thing to do is to get proceedings stopped. We must prevent the detective from going further.”

“But how is it possible to do that?”

“Lord Cantyre can do it. It is his diamond. The detective is his business.”

“But he naturally wishes the diamond discovered and the thief found.”

“There may be other things he wishes as much,” the other said coolly. “I would do a good deal for you, little Molly. Do you know that? I shall try to see what I can do with the earl. Once

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or twice he has assured me that he wishes nothing better than to please me. We shall put him to the test."

Molly waited, looking up wistfully, her small hand nestled in Eve's. There was a touch of uneasiness in her tone when she spoke at last:

"He is in love with you, Eve. I can see that. And, since you do not love him, I do not like your undertaking this. It would seem like encouraging him to hope if you asked so great a favour, and that would scarcely be fair."

The other laughed, lightly and coldly. "Oh, Molly, what it must be to have so sensitive and delicate a conscience! To be true in word and in deed—even in thought! But do not bother about that phase of the matter. After all, why should you make sure that I do not love him? He is a 'belted earl'. I am a poor girl, with scarcely a rap in the world, and only my handsome face and my red hair to win me a husband. He has a great many things I love, at all events,—ease and wealth and position—the long purse that ensures our taking no thought for the morrow (quite an impossible dictum for poverty, Molly, my dear!). Why should I not love him? May I not be hiding my feelings now, as you hid your love for Neil?"

Molly looked at her yearningly. Was she in



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jest or earnest? Which was the real Eve? The girl who had held her hand, and soothed her with loving eyes, or this half-mocking speaker?

"I don't like to hear you say you have not a rap in the world," she said wistfully. "Father is so fond of you, he would give you anything, and I would give you all I have. Did your father leave you nothing, Eve?"

"Nothing," the other said shortly. "But don't let us speak of that, Molly. Let us get back to the subject of this tiresome little glittering stone. I shall see Lord Cantyre, and get it arranged that the detective is given his leave. You are not to fret any more, or to look like that. You are to trust in the earl—and in me. Now, go and dress. Remember the Arundels and some other people are coming to dine, and I have still to make the mayonnaise and help Bethia with her water-lily napkins. Put on your blue frock, Molly, my love. It is so pretty that you can't help being happy in it. I always feel good—perfectly virtuous—in a fine frock. It is wonderful the effect clothes have on my morals." And she was gone.

It was very simple to send Lord Cantyre a note, and she bade him meet her next day on the sands, half-way on the bents to the Eden, and just behind an old wreck, whose black and rotting sides thrust themselves like giant skeleton ribs through the

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encroaching sand, and were fast being hidden from view and sucked down for ever. She was there before him in her little black pilot jacket and Astrakhan toque—shabby as the things were in themselves, every item Eve Lutterell wore took to itself a share of her curious distinction. Cantyre came leaping down the bents when he saw her, very chagrined to find she was first at the rendezvous.

“I am so sorry! What a rude beast you must have thought me!”

“I am early, don't apologize,” the girl said lightly. “We can walk up to the bank yonder and sit down. The golfers will not see us there, and St. Rule's is fortunately leaving the sands alone to-day. It is a gray day, and they don't understand the beauty of gray days. I do. Look at the sky and the sand and the sea! A study in silver-print! Look at that sea-gull—dove-coloured too! And the long billowy sweep of the sands—like an ochre-coloured prairie—and behind it all, the haunted town, sea-girt!”

She had almost forgotten her hearer. He listened, thinking nothing of her words, or of the scene—only of the face that had grown to be for him, for good or ill, the lode-star of his life.

“It was awfully good of you to send for me.”

“It was nothing of the kind, I wanted to



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“speak to you on business.” His face fell a little. There was no trace of sentiment in her tone. Evidently she would not notice it in his.

“I wanted to speak to you about this wretched diamond—I warned you it would set us all by the ears, Lord Cantyre. You see, for Molly’s sake and the Professor’s, I think the detective must be stopped.”

“Then you do think it was Bertie Luttrell? By Jove! What an ass he must be!”

“I did not say I thought so. I don’t think I do. But it is quite possible that I am wrong, and that Molly is right. She evidently thinks he is guilty. She overheard you, Lord Cantyre. When I found her she was as white as death. It would break her heart if this boy were arrested and proved guilty—if a whisper of it got out in the dear gossipy little community. And we don’t want to break Molly’s and the Professor’s hearts—you and I.”

“I don’t want to do anything you don’t want,” he said eagerly, and incoherently, a little more colour mounting into his face. “I would do anything for you—anything in the wide world. I am sorry for Miss Luttrell, and she’s a nice girl; but still, of course, if Luttrell did this, I don’t say but that I would have him arrested for it. But for your sake, if you ask me, I’ll send off Smyth

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and hush the thing up. I can say I'm looking into the thing privately."

"Yes, it is always easy to invent gray lies," she said; "I am quite an adept at that, Lord Cautyre. Not nasty bold lies, but the polite little fibs that make life so much easier—and oil the wheels of things. Molly never tells them—Davida hasn't brought her up for nothing—but we'll weave a nice little web all the same, in this instance, for Molly's sake!"

He paused, waiting, perhaps, for her to thank him.

"You quite understand I do this for you," he said rather low then. "I don't want to make any bargain; that's mean, and I don't want any return, as it were, but—I'm like a hungry man. I'm always wondering if you will ever give me just the least little bit of hope. Something to go on, Eve. You would make such a beautiful countess! In the old days, when I never thought of coming in for the title, I once saw a picture of the last Countess of Cautyre in one of the London papers, and I stuck it up in our little house in New Zealand, where Uncle Ralph and I lived. We liked the sound of the name, somehow. She was in white satin, with a long train and a tiara on her head. Uncle Ralph and I used to laugh and call her 'our countess'. And



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she wasn't half so beautiful as you. She is dead now, poor thing! Died when the boy was born. Can't you—couldn't you give me any hope?"

He had rattled on in his easy way, though he kept looking up every now and then at her face. The perfect contour of the cheek next his did not flush at all, her face was rather paler than usual. Then Eve turned round slowly.

"You mustn't hurry me about this," she said slowly at last, after a long and fixed stare at the line of silvery-gray water before her, and the wide expanse of yellow rippled sand between. "These things can't be hurried. Everything in my mind is being weighed in the balance just now, and I don't say but what the words you have said are being weighed, with other things, in the scales too. My mind is in a kind of chaotic struggle. But I can't be hurried. You must give me time. I don't say but that you tempt me. I like you, and I think I could make you happy. We could be very good *camerades*! And after all, that is a very good and substantial basis to build matrimony upon. I don't say it's romantic, but all romantic things aren't as safe. Romance is like a dangerous investment paying very high interest at first; and then there is a crash, with no assets. Good fellowship is like the three per cents—modest, but sure. No, don't be in a hurry! Please don't take my

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hand! I didn't say I would invest in the three per cents. I said I would think it over. And two things, Lord Cantyre. Don't bother me! Wait! You'll further your own cause if you do. Secondly, be sure of this. You think you know me, but you don't! And before I marry or accept you, you shall know me! You sha'n't enter into this blind-fold. As Molly says, that wouldn't be fair. I may not be strictly truthful, but I always try to be fair."

"I wish I could understand you!" he cried, possessing himself of her hand. "You like to talk in enigmas, Eve, just to perplex me! But it hasn't any effect. Nothing you could tell me could have any effect. I love you—you, just as you are—I never loved anyone else, and I loved you from the first moment I saw you!"

She let him keep her hand then. Somehow her heart softened a little to the boyish face and the eager, loving voice. It was true, she told herself sadly and bitterly, quite true! He would love her whatever she told him! And Cameron?

"He is quite different, because his ideal is different! He pictures me crystal clear—straight as a die! As honourable and upright as he is himself! He is just a wee bit puritanical and straight-laced—though I love him, I think, for it. He would never get over a stain on his idol's whiteness! His



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love would shatter at one blow. He is made like that; there is a touch of worship in the love of these cold Scots when they let themselves go, and worship will not stand sins or flaws! This is a mere boy! All my life I should be leant upon—be the one adored! Oh would I not give it all for a touch of Neil's lips on mine! I could have it! Men as strong as he yield to love! But there would be Molly! There would be my poor Molly!"

"Won't you say I may hope?"

"Yes, you may hope, Lord Cantyre," she said, coming back to earth with a long sigh; "everyone in the world may hope. It is the prerogative of the most miserable."

"And would you—will you be very angry if I give you this? You needn't wear it—only I'd like so much to think you had it. Don't be angry. I saw it in a Prince's Street jeweller's. I could not resist buying it."

Eve took the ruby ring slowly.

"You have very good taste, Lord Cantyre. But I am bound to nothing."

"Oh no! It is not meant to bind you. You said we were friends. It is only a little New Year's gift. Please!"

She was turning the ring round on her finger. It was a half-hoop of very fine rubies. Cantyre had once heard her say she preferred rubies to

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any other stone—her lips grew a little sad as she remembered that. She had promised to send Uncle Geoff help. She could easily raise money on this ring in London, and redeem it after! It would get Uncle Geoff safely away, and shut his lips for ever. She needed money badly! She turned and looked at the boyish figure beside her. "Lord Cantyre, I ought not to take it."

"But you will!"

"It is very kind of you," she said slowly, and she rose, shaking the sand from her scarlet skirt. "I shall accept it, because I like and trust you. And by and by, say in summer, you shall have a definite answer. There! My mind will have resolved itself then."

He jumped to his feet, eagerly put on the ring, "just to see it there", and then they turned their steps homeward.

The silver light had all gone from the sky, and from the sea. The black ribs of the wreck jutted out from the sand, cold and gaunt and desolate. The outline of the Castle, and of the Cathedral towers, looked gray-black too, as a gull flew overhead with a harsh discordant cry—a note of night and coming darkness it seemed, that was oddly forlorn.

Somehow the scene chilled Eve, and she sighed mentally. "I feel as if I had bound a chain about



Eve Paves the Way

myself," she thought. "A long dragging chain! Shall I end in marrying this boy? In investing in the three per cents? Why not? Love and Neil would be a brief happiness—heavenly, but brief—one day he would know all, and Molly's heart would be broken! I shall never do that, please God—I would rather disillusion both him and her at once! And to think that a day would come when Uncle Geoff's niece and pupil would hesitate to accept Lord Cantyre!"

Molly was giving her father tea in the drawing-room when Eve entered, and the old man looked up and held out his hand. He was very fond of her.

"My dear, this is not a day for you to be out."

"I am not cold, Uncle," Eve said, and she turned to Molly, who was looking at her anxiously. "I met Lord Cantyre on the sands by the wreck, Molly, and we had a nice talk. A quite satisfactory talk. He is really a very amiable young man. Not strikingly intellectual, perhaps; but the House of Lords is not particular in that respect. Eh, Professor?"

"The House of Lords, my dear?" The Professor did not care about politics. "I suppose they do their duty, all that the state requires from them. A drag on the wheel, my dear, is a useful thing."

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"Oh yes! I suppose they drag quite satisfactorily," she said. "What an odd sphere to have—to be a drag through one's existence upon all liberal legislation! But to return to Cantyre."

"Has he found the diamond?" the old man asked. "It is a most extraordinary thing! Arbuthnot was asking me my views about it last night. He seemed to think more should be done. That Lord Cantyre should engage really efficient men, and call in Scotland Yard. I must tell Cantyre. Molly, my child, ask him to dinner some night, and remind me what it was I intended to say to him. Arbuthnot said I should urge him to take steps, as the theft had taken place here. Will you remind me, Molly?"

"Yes, Father,—I—but—I think we are engaged all this week!"

"Oh, very well! I think I shall go back to the laboratory now, my dear."

He went off through the French window; for once Molly did not notice that he had not stopped to get his hat. She had come up to Eve, who was reflectively shaking the crumbs from her skirt into the fire.

"Eve! did he say yes?"

"Of course he did! He was as wax in my hands, Molly! He will dismiss Smyth."



Eve Paves the Way

“And you—you said nothing that would make him think—”

“I think you must let me keep what I said to myself, Molly,” the other said. “Let it content you that Smyth is to go—and that for the time Bertie is safe.”

“Why do you say ‘for the time’, Eve?”

“My dear, we can’t foresee things. We can’t stay the march of circumstance, or be always ready for the chances of fate. We don’t quite know how Bertie will behave. But as yet nothing is to be done. Rest on that little piece of safe ground, Molly, as long as you have it. It is a lesson of life to take no thought for the morrow, especially when to-morrow is hidden in the Book of Fate.”

“Dear—I don’t believe in Fate!”

She laid her hand on Eve’s, looking up wistfully, but the entrance of Davida with the lights prevented more.


CHAPTER XXI

Molly's "At Home"

Molly was "At Home" for the first time since her illness and the loss of the diamond, and the picturesque rooms, the one facing the chapel and the other the quaint old garden, were crowded to-day.

"You will have all St. Rule's calling, Molly. Be prepared for that!" Eve had said after lunch. "They want all particulars, my dear,—they desire to visit the scene of the catastrophe. These rooms are a sort of Chambers of Horrors on a mild scale, and you know how the British matron loves her chamber of horrors! You must preserve a brave front, a 'calm sough', as Davida would say. I'll try and stand between you and searching inquiry, if I can."

To which Molly could only smile, with a good deal of trepidation. The rooms filled early, people discussing Davida's matchless scones and tea; some grouped by the French window, where the great ivy clumps on the grass were laden down with



Molly's "At Home"

snow, and others in the ante-room, where the broken mullions of the chapel, snow-lined, faced them, seen through unshuttered windows. Molly did not light the gas till late; it was hard to shut out the loveliness of the snow-clad night, and of the quiet little ruin.

When Cantyre arrived he greeted his young hostess with slight confusion, his eyes wandering at once to where Eve stood, delighting an old professor with her charming attention. Old men always liked her. She was much more desirous of pleasing them, it seemed, than the younger generation. He wondered what she had told Miss Luttrell. As it was, Molly was confused too, and let him go at once to shake hands with her cousin, turning away to hide her burning cheeks at the other end of the room. But there she fell into danger.

"My dear Molly, do come and sit down here, and tell me the whole story about this diamond," an elderly lady said affectionately, laying a large gloved hand on the girl's arm, and drawing her down. "I can't get people to tell me the thing circumstantially. And I want to hear all about it. Please begin at the very beginning."

"I—I suppose the beginning was Lord Cantyre's bringing the diamond here for my father to see," Molly faltered. "Then we all left it on the table,

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in the library, and ran off to the fire in the kitchen. And when we came back, it was gone. That is all we know."

"But there was the broken lock. I heard about that."

"Yes—there was the broken lock."

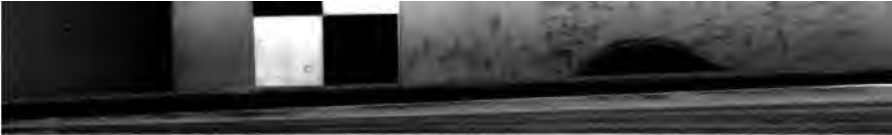
"Most mysterious!" the good lady cried. "Take me into the library, and show me where the stone was left, Molly. The General used to say I would have made a good detective. I always know when people are telling me fibs. Come and show me the scene of the theft."

She had risen determinedly, and poor Molly could do nothing but follow her. General Mainwaring's wife had ruled that gallant gentleman in life, and she ruled her small St. Rule's circle, since his demise, with as much determination.

Eve, however, came to the rescue, having overheard part of the conversation, and she turned smilingly round, to put her hand on her cousin's arm.

"Going into the library, Mrs. Mainwaring? Allow me to conduct you. I think Lady Smyth has not yet had any tea, Molly."

The good lady did not mind who took her, as long as she went, but perceiving Cantyre she waylaid him also, with a large commanding hand laid on his arm.



Molly's "At Home"

"Lord Cantyre, you had better come with us. This young lady is going to show me where you lost this wonderful diamond of yours. Quite a drama, isn't it? And so mysterious!"

"Yes, isn't it?" Cantyre agreed, rather ruefully. "But there isn't much to see, you know. We left it there, on that table. When we came back, it was not—and that's all."

"But you must have some theory. What does this man of yours say? He must have some theory. What is the use of being a detective if he doesn't ferret things out?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. Theory! Oh well, I suppose we all theorize a bit!"

"Very good!" The General's widow sat down determinedly, assuming a magisterial manner which was far from soothing to the young man. "What is your theory?"

Eve's eyes, smiling rather wickedly, were on his perturbed face, but she came to his rescue at last.

"Suppose I tell you mine, Mrs. Mainwaring."

"Yours!" A pair of gold-rimmed eye-glasses went up at that, and the girl was examined through them, with a prolonged stare. "Is yours worth hearing, young lady?"

"I don't know," Eve laughed coolly. "I am generally considered to have my share of brains, I

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believe—excuse my mentioning the fact. And at least it is original.”

“I am always delighted to hear anything original.”

“I think,” Eve observed calmly then, leaning against the wall, “that the diamond disappeared through some ghostly agency. You know this house, especially this room, is haunted. What? Did you never hear the story of the great French savant who stayed here with the Professor, and said in the morning he could not sleep for ‘Moses’? The Professor thought he meant the patriarch, but it was only mice! This room is haunted. I have heard the ghost sighing myself. Long-drawn, weary sighs. Listen! I thought I heard it just now. It is George Buchanan’s ghost, wailing over his sins. Particularly his calumnies against Queen Mary. He was a most ungrateful creature!”

“I think, my dear,” and the General’s widow rose heavily, “that you permit yourself to talk a great deal of nonsense! We do not, nowadays, believe in ghosts. They are a creation of the vulgar intellect to supply a vulgar taste—they are not for us. And as to any theory of the kind—that is childish folly!”

“I’m very sorry you think so,” Eve said meekly, her amber-coloured eyes sending lovely sparkles



Molly's "At Home"

of light towards Cantyre. "Well, listen to that! There is the ghost sighing now. Come! You did hear it, did you not? Poor old Buchanan! 'Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!'"

Mrs. Mainwaring, her foot on the step which led into the drawing-room, had paused indeed, and a little of her ruddy colour paled. It was quite true that a long sigh, coming it seemed from the room, or from the wall, had wailed out in the pause. Another, and then another, and the sound died away. Only one gas was lit, and the room had shadowy corners. Mrs. Mainwaring gave a hurried glance round, and made her way back to the drawing-room and the other guests. The thing was, of course, absurd, yet she did not quite like it. And if the girl was to be snubbed, she preferred to snub her in the gas-light.

"What was it, Eve?"

Cantyre had managed to possess Miss Luttrell's hand when they were alone, and though she drew it away, she answered him with a laughing shrug.

"Only the wind on the lightning-conductor which runs up the end of the house. I used to hear it, and it puzzled me very much. It really was eerie. And then I consulted my uncle, and he told me the explanation. The sigh came in very well, didn't it? She was horribly scared."

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"I've had an awful time of questions in there—do stop here a while," he urged. "I've gone through a regular catechism, and they do get a fellow into corners. In the Hall I've forbidden the fellows to mention the word diamond. And, I say, I've sent off Smyth. He didn't half like it. He said I hadn't given him any chance, and it wasn't fair to his professional reputation. I said hang his professional reputation."

"I shall tell Molly to-night," she said. "But we must go now, or people will talk. Thank you very much for what you have done!"

He would fain have stayed longer, but Eve led the way determinedly back to the other room, where people were beginning to take their leave, and Molly, hiding her relief as best she could, was speeding her parting guests. Cantyre, reluctantly, had to go too, and the cousins sank down on the fur rug together to discuss the afternoon.

Eve gave her tidings about the detective, and Molly clasped her hands.

"I am so thankful! Oh, so thankful! Sometimes I feel inclined to write to Bertie—to tell him all that has happened—to hear what he replies. He writes such short, jerky letters! He never did write much. And of course he never mentions the diamond. Eve, could you tell Father people have gone? There is some fresh tea here, and



Molly's "At Home"

he has been in the laboratory since lunch. When Sandy is away he always works harder. You will put on over-shoes, Eve?"

"Not a bit! The snow is quite crisp and hard. I'll bring him, Molly."

She ran through the white garden, down the path, and under the white streaming branches of the laburnum, to the laboratory. Then to her surprise she heard the murmur of voices, and she paused by the door, which was slightly ajar.

"As I was saying, Professor, the race is no aye to the swift nor the battle till the strong. I think it gangs something like that. Biblical words, I find, suit a' occasions. My grannie was deed, and she had left a' she had, past me, till a joiner i' Leith—a sneeving, psalm-singing heepocrite! He had gane till her wi' some tale o' me drinking—me, as neither touches, tastes, nor handles!"

"Sandy, Sandy, you should hardly speak so strongly as that!" the Professor said, turning round in mild remonstrance. "I fear you still occasionally forget yourself. I am ready to hope it is a thing of the past."

"It is, Professor—o' the lang past. Unless the doctor orders me—and the doctor has said afore now, that whisky stands atween me and rheumatic fever—I put my lips tae nae stimulants. But if you could advance me ten shillings the noo? I

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owe it till Marget M'Neill, honest 'ooman, and she grat to me aboot it the day. I'll be back here, working steady, and earn it. It's no a large advance."

"I have not got it about me, Sandy; and in fact, I think I gave Davida my last sovereign to-day. You must wait till I go to the bank to-morrow. It would not do to ask Davida—"

"Oh, peety me, sirs, no! Davida is a 'ooman born without the bowels o' mercy, or the milk o' human kindness! I'll dae my best tae wait, sir." He turned away, and then, as if struck by a new thought, looked round again. "Aboot this affair o' the diamond"—Sandy dearly loved a gossip, as Eve knew—"has it turned up? It gaed i' the public that Lord Cantyre—"

"I'll tell you about the diamond, Sandy," Eve said then, coming in and closing the door. "My uncle has not time. He is to go in to the house, and have some tea."

Forret admired the young lady, his head on one side, his greenish-gray eyes twinkling.

"Eh, Miss Luttrell, I've never seen you this year, tae gie a' my guid wishes! I had tae gang till Edinbury, on business—my grannie's death—expecting a bit legacy, sae to say! But hope is deceitful, and beauty vain—"

"Whose, Sandy? Yours or hers?"

Molly's "At Home"

"You're fond o' a joke, mem! Weel, my hope was vain. I got never a bawbee, as I was telling the Professor. And me in sair need o' siller! I'm owing my landlady a pickle, and she's talking o' getting rid o' me, if it's no paid. Weel, weel! I'll no hender a leddy wi' my troubles! I was just telling the Professor I hear that the detective chappy had laid his hand on the thief."

"Has he? I have not heard that," Eve said. "Are you coming, Uncle?"

"Yes, my dear. Give me my coat, Sandy, and take off this apron. I have been up in the lathe-room, my dear, grinding diamonds. Where did I put my glasses? Dear me, now, where did I put them?"

He gazed round helplessly.

"Are you sure, Uncle," Eve said idly, "that you didn't take the diamond and grind it down for your polishing through sheer force of habit?"

Sandy laughed at that, untying the old man's canvas working-apron. The Professor was always a spectacle on his lathe-room days. "Eh, that's no a bad idea! But we'd better no mention it till Davida, or she'd snap oor nose aff! Davida's temper is waur nor ever since the diamond's loss. A body would think she was suspeckit! Ay, it's no a bad idea! Ye micht hae ta'en it, sir, absent-minded like, like the day ye pit your watch i' the egg-

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boiler instead o' the egg, when Davida laid them baith on the study table! I'm telt it would hae been impossible to sell or dispose o' a diamond that size. A fine cheat for the thief!"

The Professor was ready, and Eve went with him to the house. There, a sudden thought striking her, she ran upstairs, and then went back to the laboratory. Sandy was putting away some apparatus, humming a tune, but he looked round at her quickly as she entered, perceiving something in her hand, and his eyes sparkled. As much as Sandy could ever take a fancy to any person, he had taken it for the Professor's beautiful niece—he liked Molly too, very much, but he had decided Eve had even a more "taking" way. And she was "awfu' bonnie".

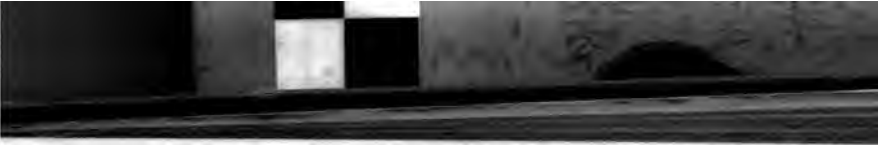
"Sandy, would you like to earn five shillings?"

"I dinna say but I would. Hoo could I oblige you, Miss Luttrell?"

"Can I trust you to hold your tongue?"

He nodded his head sagaciously, rubbing his hands.

"If you do," Eve began slowly, "every now and then I shall give you something. I shall know if you don't. Now, do you know a little hut on the cliffs, near the Buddo Rock, which was built by Mr. Cameron one year, for geologizing purposes?"



Molly's "At Home"

"I ken it fine, miss, since I helped tae build it. And the ither day I heard that some tinker was living there. A friend o' mine saw the smoke o' his fire. It's no a bad place, and there's heaps o' firewood lying about—driftwood and the like—"

"A man is there—a poor man—but not a tinker, and I promised to send him something. The money is in this letter, and he will write to me at once on receiving it. If you take this out to him, Sandy, I shall be your friend. But you must hold your tongue."

She had slipped the five shillings into his huge hand.

"It shall be dune, miss,—and on the quiet."

"You will say nothing. Only give it to him. If he is out, push it under the door."

"I understand, miss; and to the letter it shall be dune."

Eve was gone then, speeding back to the house; and, the letter thrust into his coat pocket, Sandy made his way through the scullery and into the kitchen. It was his only way out.

Davida, covering a pie at the table, looked up sourly as he passed, and he stopped, making his usual obsequious greeting.

"Hard weather, Davida! Hard on the puir and needy! Fine to be you, i' your warm kitchen,

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wi' never a care i' this world! Nor for the next neither, I'm thinking! Eh, it maun be grand to be as sure o' heaven as you are, Davida! Sinners like mysel are fu' o' envy o' ye."

"Thank you, Sandy!" Davida went on with her work, sarcastically. "Is it siller you're aifter, or drink? I hae neither the ane nor the ither for ye the day."


"I want neither the ane nor the ither!" Sandy drew himself up with dignity. "Sic' suspeecions are beneath you and me! I'm just back frae Edinbury and a funeral. My auld granny has gone the way o' a' flesh—"

"Your auld grannie? What's her name?"

"Macdonald—Leezbeth Macdonald. She bided i' South Leith. A douce honest 'ooman."

"You needna tell me!" Davida cried scornfully, taking her hands out of the flour. "I kent her! Ma mither kent her! She was a' you say. She was cook wi' Bethune o' Castle Bethune, Fife, for three year, when my mither was housemaid. But it's a late day for you to be in Edinbury for her funeral, for she deed mony year syne, as I weel ken! I had her mourning cairds. You're an awfu' sinner, and a grand leear, Sandy Forret, sure as my name's Davida Forrester!"

This was rather a crushing indictment, but Sandy rose from it like an india-rubber ball. "Did



Molly's "At Home"

I say Leezbeth Macdonald?" he cried cheerfully. "Whaur's my memory? It was my fether's mither; she was merrit on—"

"Hoot, get awa wi' ye! I canna bide here tae hear mair lees! Is the Professor advancing your wages on the heid o' this?"

"The maitter o' my wages is atween my maister and me," he said sternly, walking to the door. "So I'll bid you guid-nicht. It's a peety your tongue is sae like a razor, Davida, my 'ooman! You're far frae loving me, and we're telt tae love oor neebours as oorselves!—that's i' the Bible, an' no tae be negleckit as you negleck it! I'm thinkin' ye're far frae the kingdom, aifter a'!"

He chuckled grimly as he walked up the lane after that. Davida had cornered him, truly; he had not remembered that she knew his grandmother. He had, indeed, invented that worthy woman's demise as a good and pathetic excuse for his visit to Edinburgh—and the Professor's purse was always easily drawn when a relative's death was in the question; but he felt all the same that he had not altogether been vanquished.

Davida did so detest to have Scripture quoted to her, and he so loved to do it.

When he got home after some purchases, he put on the kettle, and very soon Eve's envelope was steamed open. It contained a bank-note and a

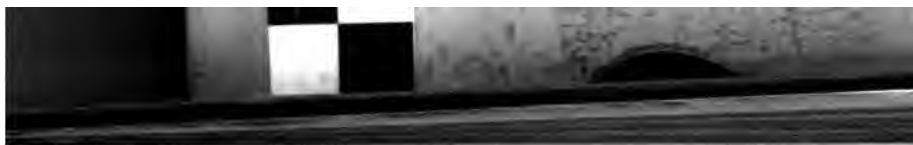
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letter, written in French. Sandy screwed his head this way and that, under the lamp, but after spelling out the first few words, and failing to make sense of them, he put it down with disgust. Should he go with the missive? She would assuredly find out if he did not, and then all future tips would vanish. She was a clever young lady, too, and he rather liked her; and she was very bonnie! Yet, who could this man be? Why should he live there? Why should she send him money secretly? "About this diamond, there was that affair o' the broken lock," Sandy cogitated, refastening the envelope, and putting on the kettle once more; "I never made that oot! Somebody had a hand i' that. I'd like fine tae ken wha! Supposing I pit the detective on a clue—on track o' the thief? Wouldna Lord Cantyre stand a tip? Wouldna the detective? I think I'll gang and deliver the letter, and see what the man's like. I could maybe manage to get a poond or twa oot o' the business, since my grannie's funeral turned oot sic' a disappointment!"

He chuckled again, and finally took a bottle from his cupboard, which he held to the light lovingly. "It's no muckle," he said to himself ruefully, "but what there is is o' the best."

Of this "best" he took a long draught, and then put it away.

"I neither touch, taste, nor handle, Davida," he



Molly's "At Home"

said, addressing an imaginary listener. "Here's tae your health, my 'ooman. You've given me mony a hard word. May I live tae see the day when I can dae ye an ill turn!"

After which pious wish he went out and closed the door.



CHAPTER XXII

“Sae my True Love did Lichtly Me”

Mr. Smyth, understood to be from Scotland Yard, had betaken himself and his black bag back to London, and there was no one now in the little rocky hut on the way to the Buddo Rock.

Uncle Geoff wrote that he had received Eve's “communication” by the hand of her messenger, who, by the way, had had the ineffable impertinence to try and “pump” him—Uncle Geoff—needless to say without result.

Thus far absolutely nothing had been discovered as to the thief, and here the affair seemed to rest for the present.

St. Rule's, it may be said, chafed sadly at this disappointing result. Uncle Ralph in Australia chafed, so secretly did Lord Cantyre. But he said nothing. Eve had asked him to send away the detective, and tacitly screen Bertie Luttrell, and he would do anything in the world for Eve. As for St. Rule's, though the inhabitants of the little city fumed and conjectured for a little, gradually the story of the diamond died down. If Lord




“Sae my True Love did Lichtly Me”

Cantyre chose to let the thing rest, and lose so valuable a jewel with equanimity, St. Rule's supposed he must be allowed to do so. There came a period of apparent inaction—the lull that broods before the storm-clouds descend—like the hush we see in Nature, when every leaf hangs silent and motionless, and the birds are still in their nests, while the clouds gather, black and lowering above in the sky, sinister and menacing.

Neil Cameron came as usual to see Molly, and she was very happy. It was only now and then that it struck her that her lover had changed a good deal of late. He had never been what could have been called uproariously cheerful, but at least he had been quietly happy. She sometimes wondered if some unknown burden lay upon him—some secret care. But when she tried, very delicately and tenderly, to ask the question, he always pushed it aside almost indignantly.

“What burden should I have, Molly? I have health and strength, and—you!” The last words came with a ring of pain. “And some day I mean to win success—to wring it from fortune's hand, if hard work can obtain it.”

The reply was somehow scarcely like Neil, but she said no more. Afterwards she told herself that she had wilfully shut her eyes—that she would not see what she might have read between the lines.



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Cameron received a letter, however, one afternoon, which represented the first rain-drop of the storm, though its contents seemed to mean success for him, and change. One of the staff of a northern university was ill, and wrote asking if he would take the work of the classes for the rest of the session—acting as *locum tenens* while the chief was absent in India. The remuneration was good; Cameron knew the post meant that better things must be in store in other directions. And yet his face scarcely brightened as he put the letter in his pocket and set off for the sands. It was always his favourite walk, and he had often met the two girls there in fine weather. The offer meant leaving St. Rule's—it was therefore he did not rejoice — meant losing the chance of seeing one face. How false he was! Oh, how faithless!

“I shall tell Molly that we could be married at once,” he said to himself, passing down by the links and the club-house, and on to the firm yellow sands. “That would be the best way. To take her with me—then I should never think of Eve again. I need never see her. Once she was my wife I should be true to Molly, in deed as in thought. This fever would die out of my veins. This torture! It is only a matter of will. Everything is a matter of will-power. To be true to my



“ Sae my True Love did Lichtly Me ”

plighted word and to forget all else. Surely my will is strong enough for that!”

Was it? He strode on at a great pace, till the little city was left far behind, a phantom line of broken towers, outlined above the gray sea. He was so wrapped in thought, that he had reached the estuary before he realized how far he had come, and then he turned and strode back. He thought he had conquered. He would go to the Professor's that night and ask for Molly, would see her herself, and tell her the news. But, half-way home, he sat down behind the wreck, the banks of sand and rasping green grass around him, and there he suddenly cast himself face downwards, his hands clasping the tough roots. Never to see her! Never to see her again! He would kill his love, tear it out for ever! He would give Molly all that she deserved, all love and honour, but he was rooting something out that seemed part of his heart-strings! He told himself that after this he would never willingly think of Eve again. How distinctly he could see her face now—the sparkle of her wonderful hazel eyes, the bronze-gold waves and ripples of her hair, the white neck, the laughing lips, now mocking, now gentle, the ever-varying, ever-betraying face! What of her share in this? Did she care? Could he have won her—if he had been free? Involuntarily he groaned

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aloud at the thought, and his hands clenched the grass more fiercely. What if she cared! If she suffered too!

"Neil?"

He had heard nothing. It was growing dark, and he had seen no one near. He started up into a sitting posture, and stared before him as if the speaker were an apparition. For a moment he could not see clearly. Molly had come down the links upon him in the clear cold February twilight. She had caught sight of him, and recognized the familiar tweed coat. She looked a little pale and startled, but she was so natural in her pretty brown costume, and hat with its plummy feathers, that Cameron regained his composure in a moment and tried to laugh.

"Molly!" he said. "You came upon me like a ghost, little girl! You startled me!"

"Did I? I am very sorry. Sit still, Neil. I want to talk to you for a moment. It is not cold."

She sat down on the bank with unusual deliberation of movement, and Cameron turned his haggard face upon her. There was something new in her voice he had never heard before—a ring of determination and decision, that was unlike anything he had ever known in her hitherto.

"I want to know, Neil," she said very quietly then, when the silence had grown rather painful,



“Sae my True Love did Lichtly Me”

“what is the secret which you are hiding from me? There is a secret. Something makes you unhappy. And I think I have a right to know it. If I am not worthy, then I am not worthy to be your wife.”

“Worthy!” broke from him passionately. “You, Molly! It is all the other way. I have never been worthy of you. But I shall try to be. Molly, I shall try! I have just heard that I can go to Aberdeen as *locum tenens* to Professor Masterton—‘local demon’” (he tried to smile), “and this may mean that your father will give you to me at once.”

“And the joy of the thought was so great, that you cast yourself upon the sand and groaned!”

Was that really Molly Luttrell? It was the first bitter speech of her gentle life, repented almost as soon as spoken; and then she continued with a little laugh that was sadder than any he had ever heard from her: “Neil, I think my eyes are opened at last. I think they have been gradually opening. You are changed. You have changed to me. Is that not so? I think you must be brave now and tell me the truth. The truth is always kindest.”

“I never meant to tell you.”

He “never meant to tell her”! She whitened slowly.

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"No? But that was neither true nor brave—I thought you were both."

"Molly! I feel such a cur—such a scoundrel!"

"Do you?" she said sadly; "you should not. I suppose you could not help yourself. We hear everywhere of a 'law of change', and this kind of thing happens frequently. Two people play a pretty little idyll—only the one risks everything, and the other—I suppose the other risked less than he thought. You were mistaken, Neil. There is nothing wrong in that. I do not like to hear you calling yourself hard names. It is not like you, and they do not sound appropriate."

She tried to laugh a little.

There was another silence then. The tide was coming in fast, and the waves broke in a long soothing rhythm before them. A flock of seagulls, turning their white breasts up to the last light in the sky, swayed to and fro above, in a sweeping, swirling cloud, now high and now low. Cameron stole a glance at her face, perhaps misled by the even level of her voice, and his heart contracted. Was that Molly? How she had changed! How strangely she had changed in that little space of time! His little girl's gentle childlike face, always with that curious look of soft and happy innocence—it looked old, almost old, and cold and set!



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“Molly!” he cried sharply. “If you would blame me, if you would accuse me, I could kill myself! Do you know, I could kill myself for causing you this suffering!”

“You will forget that,” she said, turning round and speaking still in the same quiet voice. “After all, it was not you—Eve would say it was Fate! I suppose such things are decreed. There is nothing left to say. Why should I accuse or blame you? I do neither. We understand each other, and we can say good-bye now, and here, quietly. It is better to arrange that. I shall tell my father by and by. It can come out after you are gone, in quite a matter-of-fact way. We changed our minds, that was all. That is all anyone need ever know. And I think I must be going home now. Please do not come with me. Here is the ring, Neil. Do you mind if I ask you to throw it away—yonder, into the waves? I should not care for you to give it to anyone else. Good-bye!” She had risen, and she held out her hand, still with that perfect self-possession. Molly had never shown him this side of her nature before; he could have cursed himself as he looked into the white stillness of her face, the emptiness of her eyes. But he could say nothing. She had asked nothing. Did she know?

“Molly! Must it be good-bye?”

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"Only for the present. I should like you to come and see my father as usual," she said. "We shall meet as friends, I hope, by and by. I must go. It is getting quite dark. See! The clouds have gathered all over the sea. I cannot even see the gulls. They are swallowed up in the grayness." She spoke mechanically, as if making conversation. Then she drew her hand away, almost sharply, and, turning, walked from him towards the links and the town, climbing up by the bents.

Cameron watched the little light figure, standing quite still till the waves washed at his feet. He looked up then, remembering her request about the ring. It was a half-hoop of turquoises — a very inexpensive little ring — but he had always liked to see the blue against the "white wonder" of Molly's hand. He threw it away as she had requested, but it only fell a short way off, and he could see it shining on the sand, and with a kind of cry he knelt down and snatched it from the leaping waves, thrusting it into his pocket. And then he too turned, and with rapid steps made for the town, while the storm, breaking at last, drove its first cold drops lashing in his face.

Free! He was free! But did freedom bring always with it such a sense of loss? Such a sense



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of self-contempt? She had not said one word of blame. He wished fiercely that she had.

Molly had fretted and grieved over Bertie's troubles; she faced her own very differently. When she got home that night she was just in time for dinner, and no one noticed anything wrong with the gentle little hostess. Eve did not, and the girls sat in the drawing-room as usual after dinner, Eve going to the piano to sing, as she only did for Molly when they were alone.

It was a cruel chance that made her take Blumenthal's setting of an old Scottish song—the saddest love-song ever penned,—and sing it dramatically—wedding, as she always did, the soul of a true artist to the lovely voice Nature had bestowed.

“O waly, waly, but love is bonnie
A little time when it is new,
But when 'tis old, it waxeth cold,
And fades awa' like morning dew!
O wherefore should I busk my head,
O wherefore should I comb my hair,
For my true love has me forsook
And says he'll never love me mair!”

“It is a lovely old song, Molly,” Eve said, looking round to see Molly's dark head outlined against the yellow cushions. “But too tragic,

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too despairing. People should not suffer like that. They should not stake so much. It is a great mistake in life to play for too high stakes. Remember that, my dear. Don't risk all in one throw. It is an error women make."

"Is it?" Molly's soft voice said. "Perhaps it is. But we don't begin with experience, Eve. And I think women rarely count the cost of what they do—till too late! It is easy to be wise after the event."

"Quite true." Eve was playing the next chords, and presently the liquid voice took up the words.

"I set my back into an aik,
I thoct it was a trusty tree,
But first it bent and then it brak',
Sae my true love did lichtly me."

"What does it mean, Molly,—exactly? Sometimes your Scottish phrases evade me just a little. To 'lichtly' her?"

Molly paused a moment. How cruel it was! Eve was playing softly, her eyes meeting the other's through the faint fire-light shadows of the room; they had not lit the gas. The fire-light flickered upon her head, with its weight of ruddy gold, upon the matchless white of the skin of her neck, outlined against her shabby black evening frock. Molly could see the proud poise of the head, the supple grace of the whole figure. And



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as she looked, the girl's heart told her the bitter truth. He had loved Eve! That was the secret of it all! He had tried to be true, but the one vivid strong love had driven out the slighter. And oh! small wonder, the poor heart said to itself passionately—small wonder! She was like a cold, pale snowdrop beside this glorious rose—all light and colour and perfume! He had tried to be true. Poor Neil!

The wonderful strain of mother-love—mother abnegation, that is in every good woman's love, swelled in Molly's heart then, and seemed to ease her own fierce pain. Poor Neil! No one—no one would ever love him as she could do—not even Eve! Her love would have lasted, faithful, all-embracing, tender, strong; and now—now he would have to go through life without it!

She could stand clear of her own agony and loss, and recognize this—could forget all for a moment but a strange sense of pity.

“Molly, darling, are you asleep? Isn't it lovely? That long sighing, sobbing note. Neilson sings it, I see. What does it mean, Molly? To 'lichtly' her?”

“‘Pass her by lightly’ would be the bald translation,” Molly said then slowly. “But it is something quite untranslatable. In all language, I suppose, there is something quite untranslatable.”

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She paused a little. "This woman's love was her all—weighed above and beyond everything in her life—reached to the Beyond! His seems to have been light enough to allow him to suspect and misjudge. Oh, I think you understand, don't you? They loved—differently."

"Yes." The other girl left the piano and came up to the fire.

"But all love, speaking generally, is like that, Molly. 'One who loves, and one who permits herself or himself—to be loved'—you know the French saying? And I don't know but that I should, after all, prefer to be the permitting one." She laughed lightly. "Now and then there is that *rara avis*, an almost equal love—too often one is the inferior nature, and sooner or later the higher and nobler of the two will find that out, and then the crash has to come—the disillusionment! Of all horrible things, disillusionment is the worst. It is the bitterest tragedy in life, I think."

"Do you?" Molly rose and threw the cushions back wearily. "I think I shall go and see if the Dad is still in the laboratory. Davida says Sandy is back, and keeping wonderfully sober. Good-night, Eve!"

She put her arms round her cousin's neck and kissed her very gently and softly; yet something



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in the kiss made Eve look searchingly. Molly had said nothing. Only her lips had somehow a curious chill. She had made up her mind that Eve should only learn the truth with the rest, slowly—in time. Throwing a light shawl over her head, she went out into the garden.

“What is it?” Eve said to herself. “Something is wrong with her voice, and something is wrong with her eyes, though she has not been crying. Molly has somehow the look of a child, hurt desperately, but too brave to cry. Is it anything about him? Has she heard anything? Does she suspect anything? It is nothing against me, or she could not kiss me as she did. If she had guessed the truth, she could have killed me, not kissed me.”

Molly waited in the garden, before she went into the laboratory, trying to get the sound of Eve’s song out of her ears. The old garden was a torture to her to-night. The line of naked rose-trees on her right—she and Neil had paced there many a day; the old elderberry-tree by the boundary wall, under which they had sat while Davida gathered the flat purple clusters for elderberry wine; the laburnum, from which he had once gathered a spray to put in her hair; the apple-tree, where he had said, with his hand on her shoulder, that her face—that her face was like— Molly caught her breath with a moan then—she walked on determinedly.

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It had been so sweet, too sweet to die and change! All the world had changed. It was a new, empty world, empty and cold; the colour was gone from life, for love was gone!

Why should it all have been? Why? Why?

People talked of God's dealings as all love. But she could not so have tortured anyone. She had done no wrong. She had only loved—blindly, devotedly—and it had all passed, like the apple-blossom on the tree, blown away by a sudden wintry blast. Love was no more, the frail white petals were no more.

The laboratory door opened then, and the Professor came out, Molly going forward to meet him.

"I was just coming for you, Dad. Are you coming in?"

"I had forgotten something, my child. It is a book on my dressing-table. I have had dinner, have I not?"

Molly laughed, almost naturally. It was strange, she thought, how life would go on exactly the same, and how little it would matter to anyone in all the world that God could be cruel to her, and that Neil could find that he did not love her any more. Even that seemed a very natural thing.

"Daddy dear, it is ten o'clock. Don't you think you will come in now?"

"Oh no, my dear! certainly not. Sandy is



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waiting. I had written some figures down, and I want to consult them. Could you get the book?”

“Very well, Daddy. But go in now.”

He did not even hear her. He had gone back to the laboratory, where she presently took him his book. The Professor kissed her absently, as he thanked her. “Go to bed, my child, and take your beauty sleep. I think you said it was about ten, and that I had had my dinner?”

Molly looked over at Sandy, engaged at the bench. “Will you see my father into the house when you leave, Sandy, and lock up after?”

“I’ll do that, Miss Molly. Good-night!”

“Good-night!”

She went into the house by the kitchen, and Davida, giving a last “tidy up”, saw nothing wrong. In the weeks that followed no one saw anything wrong. Long ago Davida had said Molly was “soft but supple”.

CHAPTER XXIII

Bertie's Return

When it is jocund spring, flower-bedecked and leafy, south of the Tweed, St. Rule's has scarcely thrown off its winter garb; but spring, when she does come, is lovely enough to earn forgiveness for her tardiness.

It was May now, the end of the month, and in the Professor's garden the apple and pear blossom were out, and the laburnum-tree hung its yellow tassels over the path. The back of the house was embowered in rare and delicate green, amongst which the delicate white petals of the old pear-trees trained on the walls fluttered softly to the ground. Eve used to spend long hours at her window, looking down into this sweet garden. There was a little rift of plum-blossom now on her sill from the old tree, and the scent of all the lovely growing things below, and of the blossom itself, came up softly to her face. In the walk where were the white roses, the buds, sheathed still, only peeped amongst the leaves, but the great apple-tree was a lovely mass of pink and white,

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and "dusty millers", daffodils, wall-flower, primula, and striped polyanthus were growing riotously, as everything did, in Molly's garden. So was the hawthorn-tree, what the Scots call the "flourish", over the wall. Molly had never the heart, she said, to prune and cut. Things grew as they chose, wandered and trailed as they chose. Long rose-sprays were tangling far up in the apple-tree, looking down, to smile audaciously where no rose had any right to be; the ivy clumps were sending long tendrils over the grass; and pink tassels were falling from the big rebus-bush which had grown out of all proportion in its spreading bulk. Even the old elderberry-tree would have gone long ago, Davida said, in any "sensible garden". But Molly did not like "sensible gardens", and the gardeners pruned where they dared, delicately and cautiously, the girl's watchful eye upon them.

Eve could see Molly to-day gathering a great posy of lilac, the yellow tassels of the laburnum touching her hair, and swaying to and fro in the sweet-scented wind. She looked up at Eve presently, and smiled and waved her hand. It was Molly's new smile, sweet as of old, but just a little apart from herself.

She had never spoken fully to Eve, or to anyone else, of what had happened in regard to Cameron. People had learned that the engagement was at an

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end, that was all, and Eve had been told the same. "Only don't ask me anything about it," Molly had added; and the gentle voice was so final that her friend did not venture any question. What had happened was a little hard to surmise, but Cameron made no sign.

"Molly is changed," Eve was saying to herself now. "She is stronger than I thought, much stronger, but she has a heartache under all that soft gentleness of hers that would break down most people. Will it all come right? Would it all come right if I were out of the way? What is he waiting for? Would he come back to her if I were definitely out of reach? Sometimes I think so. And summer will be here soon, and I shall have to go! My year will be over. If I were to marry Cantyre, it might be possible to keep Molly in the dark, always, as to my deceit. And I think—I think—he might come back to her! Her face is always tugging at my heart-strings. The little, brave white face, the empty eyes! Molly's eyes used to be the very homes of content. The Professor sees nothing; even Davida only thinks she is 'run down'. Only I know! Shall I end it all, and give Cantyre his answer to-day?"

There are many and varying motive-powers in our actions; and Eve's beautiful face changed and hardened as she rose presently, forgetting all the




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charm of spring in the garden, and put on her hat and gloves.

"I'll go and think it out on the cliffs," she said to herself, "I can't drift any more. Cantyre, good-natured as he is, won't wait for ever. His love will stand the test when I tell him everything; Neil's would not! The one loves me for what he sees, the other for what he thinks he sees. I am foolish to hesitate! After all, I was made to walk in silk attire, and I have contradicted my destiny hitherto with amazing obstinacy. Molly's happiness on one side, and the silk attire for the Countess of Cantyre; and on the other a little brief glory and happiness, then disillusionment! For it would surely follow, and Molly's heart would be broken! Oh, I think Cantyre had better have his way. Neil would come back to her in time."

She went out suddenly and sharply, and shut the door behind her. Presently she had turned through the old stone gateway towards the harbour and the cliffs, walking rapidly.

Molly went on picking her lilac posy in the garden, and presently she did a little weeding, observing how near the narcissi were to bloom. Cameron had been very fond of lilies; he had quoted Ben Jonson's lines to her once, and they came to Molly's memory as she stood for a moment with



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the honey-sweet scent of the elderberry-blossom in her face.

“Have you seen but a white lily grow,
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall of the snow,
Before the soil has smirched it?
Have you felt the wool of the beaver?
Or swan's down ever?”

“Molly! Molly! Are you there?”

The girl stood quite still, feeling as if she must be dreaming. Was she? It was Bertie's voice. Bertie! And he—he ought not to come there!

She stood stock-still in her emotion, and she was standing thus when Bertie came easily down the path, wearing a fashionable coat of the very latest cut, and with very immaculate gloves. His attire was redolent of Bond Street. Never had he seemed more at ease, more content with the world in general and himself in particular. Anything more unlike Molly's preconceived idea of him, rushing in hot haste to the States, and living there, with a Damocles sword over his head, could not well be imagined. If a sword hung over Bertie's fair and closely-cropped head now, he either regarded it very lightly, or the hair seemed to him a rope of satisfactory reliability.

“Bertie!” she gasped. “When did you come? And—and was it wise?”



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"Wise!" He looked at her indignantly, then led the way to the garden-seat under the tree. "What on earth are you driving at? Do you mean did I get a holiday? Of course I did. We landed two days ago, after a jolly successful tour, and we don't start starring in the provinces till June. How are you, Molly? How's the Prof.? Been blowing himself up lately, or living on a straw per day, as usual? How's Sandy, the old rascal? And Davida? Any more fires? I walked in at the front-door. You're looking a bit hipped. Where's Cameron? Is he pretty fit?"

He had taken out his cigarette-case, and now lit one of his usual Egyptian brand, taking a match from a very elegant and bejewelled receptacle. Master Bertie was evidently in what he would have called himself "very good form". So Molly perceived, and she grew more and more bewildered. He talked as if he had not a care in the world.

"I can't answer all your questions at once, Bertie," she said, taking off her old leather gloves. "The Dad is quite well. His pamphlet will be out soon—the one on 'Phosphatic Deposits'. He went up to London in May, and read his paper on the new anæsthetic to the Royal Society. He came home with somebody else's Gladstone bag, which made Davida very angry, and I don't think he had

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eaten a good meal all the time he was away. She said he had not, he was so thin. Sandy is all right. He is talking just now of going to the States, but Davida says it is one of his 'lies'. How did you like the States, Bertie?"

"Ripping, just ripping! I made a sensation, I tell you, Molly. They say mine is one of the purest tenors on the stage. Awfully jolly girls, Americans, though they do rake a fellow up! Expect a fellow to black their shoes out there, so to say; but they have such pretty feet, you don't mind. Oh, I had a ripping time! And I made the dollars spin. You earn 'em, but you spend 'em. You see, over the Pond, the girls expect to be taken round a bit, and suppers at Delmonico's, and flowers and gloves, run away with quite a pile. But I'll go back! You bet, I'll go back! Everyone said I must."

"And—you were quite happy?"

"I should say I was! I say, where's Cameron? Here?"

"In Aberdeen, I believe."

"You believe? What does that mean? Doesn't he write?"

"No. We—I meant to tell you when you came back," Molly faltered, feeling that her brother's angry eyes were on her face, and that a storm of questions might be expected. "You gave me



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so few addresses, Bertie. We have broken off our engagement. We—changed our minds.”

The gray lie—it had grown quite glib—faltered just a little from Molly’s lips, and Bertie turned on her fiercely.

“What the deuce do you mean by that?”

“Bertie, what I say.”

“Come, Molly, no humbug! I wondered what was up the moment I saw you. You are quite thin—you have lost all your colour. You needn’t flush up now, it doesn’t take me in. And you were fond of Cameron, I know that. I’m your brother, and I mean to get to the bottom of this. The Professor’s not a man, he’s a fossil!”

“Bertie!”

“He is. He wouldn’t notice if you or I perished before his eyes—not if a piece of apparatus was near, or a microscope! And I know you women and girls. You are the very deuce at deceit! Something is under this. What? Come, I mean to know.”

Molly turned her colourless face, her lips firm.

“Bertie, you will please believe what I say. I have told you all you shall hear. The engagement is at an end, that is enough.”

There was a long pregnant pause.

“Oh, is it? Well, we shall see about that. However, you shall have your way for the present.”

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Then he changed his tone. "What about Cantyre's diamond? Has it turned up?"

He had flung away the cigarette, after his angry pause. Molly turned round sharply, her wide eyes fixed on his face, as if she would read his very soul.

"Bertie, no! But—oh, Bertie, can't you—can't you tell me the truth? What do you know about it?"

"I know nothing," he said. "I asked from curiosity, that's all. Though I'll confess this to you, Molly, now we're on the subject. When I was so hard pressed that time, you know, I did feel jolly inclined, once, to make off with it."

"You felt—inclined—to make—off with it? But—you—did not?"

"Of course not. What a softy you are, Molly! It was only a mad idea. I was going upstairs for the hose, when I heard something, or thought I heard something, in the drawing-room, and I ran into the library. There lay the diamond, glittering like blazes! I lifted, and looked at it, thinking how easily I could pocket it. But I put it down, of course, and then I met Bethia, silly little idiot, gaping at me on the stairs. I thought at once she'd wonder what I was doing, and later, when the diamond was stolen, and all the row began, I thought if she told she had seen me it might get



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me into a mess, so I tipped her well. What are you staring at, Molly?"

"She told me, Bertie! I—I thought you had taken it!"

"Well, upon my word!"

"How could I help it? You told me the money was paid for your debt. I could not see how else you could have obtained it. I thought you had raised money on the diamond! How did you raise it, Bertie?"

"If we are in for confessions," he said grimly, "I suppose we may as well go on. I must say you are a pretty kind of sister. The idea! As if I would steal a thing like that! Oh, I know what you will say! I forged the cheque, and all that; and it's true, but I wasn't quite myself when I did that, and it nearly drove me mad, the worry of it. But the idea—the idea of your suspecting me!"

"Bertie, how did you get the money?"

"From Cameron. There!"

"From Cameron? From Neil?"

"Yes. He wouldn't let me tell you, or anyone. He knew you would hate the idea, and so did I. You would have made a fuss, to a certainty."

"But Neil had no money."

"He hadn't, till that night. Then a lawyer wrote telling him of a legacy he had got—a nice

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tidy little sum of £500. He is an awfully decent fellow. He knew of my mess, and for your sake he gave it to me."

"For your sake!"

Oh, strange, sweet words—to strike her now with a stab of pain, that made her wince and start as she heard.

"And he never told me!"

"Of course not. I don't suppose he dreamt you'd be such a silly as to suspect your own brother."

"Bertie, you will repay him?"

"Oh, don't you worry! Now that he isn't to be my brother-in-law, I suppose I must. He will have to wait, that's all. But since I didn't take the diamond, who did?"

"No one knows."

"But what about the London fellow, the detective? What is Cantyre about? Isn't he following the thing up?"

Should she explain? It could do no harm, surely, now.

"Bertie, the detective—went to Oxford, and found out, somehow, about you—about the cheque—"

"You don't say so!" Bertie dropped his cigarette, much taken aback. "That would be Brunton—I'll bet! He never could hold his tongue.

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Well, what then? The detective didn't tell all St. Rule's, did he? And what the deuce did it matter to him? He wasn't engaged to follow me up."

"He seems to have suspected you about the other thing too."

"The diamond?"

"Yes."

"Well, upon my word! But who choked him off?"

"Lord Cantyre."

"I'm much obliged to him, I'm sure. Sent him away?"

"Yes, Bertie."

"And they have been doing nothing? Going off on this wrong scent all the time? Fools!"

"It—it seemed suspicious."

"Thank you, Molly! Well, I'll relieve his lordship's mind on that score, and he can summon back his detective whenever he likes. I must say this is news. But I didn't know Cantyre was so precious fond of me."

Molly's head drooped. She felt fairly overcome by her brother's righteous wrath.

"Come, Molly. What made him shield me? You? You don't mean to say that he and you—"

She shook her head coldly. She could even smile.

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"No, Bertie. But he would do anything for Eve's sake."

"And she persuaded him to do it? Well, I've got something rather curious to tell you about her by and by, but we'll let that go just now. What made her interest herself in me?"

"She is your cousin, Bertie."

"She isn't, but that doesn't matter. Go on."

Molly was so used to wild and foundless statements, that she paid no particular heed to this one, resuming patiently.

"I asked her to use her influence on Lord Cantyre, and she did so."

"I see. Well, I'll have a word or two to say about her, as I say, after. It's too long a story to begin now, especially as I had better go in and see your father. You've made me open my eyes a bit, Molly, I tell you. It's a world of surprises. I'm a jolly good-natured fellow to forgive you as I do, and pass it over."

To which Molly made no answer at all, only following this virtuous brother to the laboratory.

Their father raised his head at his son's entrance, and regarded them with mild affection, his look changing to surprise and pleasure, as it seemed to dawn upon him that there was something new in Bertie's presence there.

"My dear boy! It is surely some time since



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you were here? Why, you were away—you were in the States, were you not? How are you, my dear boy? Very well, I hope?"

"Very fit, thank you, Father. Lapse of time doesn't seem to bother you. I see you are the same. Coat a bit grimier, that's all, and a few more strata of dust in the lab. How are you, Sandy? Been on the bust lately, eh?"

"I neither touch, taste, nor handle, sir. I hope I see you pretty well. Did you like Ameriky, Mr. Bertie?"

"Very well. Dollars to be got there, Sandy; heaps of 'em for the picking up, so to say. If you're smart enough to pick 'em."

"So I hear, sir."

"But you've got to steer clear of the saloons. They abound, I tell you! What's this I hear about your starting off?"

"I'm thinking o' it, sir, I raelly am. I've a brither i' New York, and he's offered to pay my passage. He has a big gowf factory, and supplies the President."

"Indeed! Didn't know he played golf. But I thought you were rooted to St. Rule's?"

"'Deed and I'm no, sir. They're a set o' pharisaical sinners, and that's the truth. The Professor is aff to Edinbury pretty frequent, too, the noo, and I get but little enough pay. Davida pits a

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spoke i' my wheel. He canna dae a' he would, I'll say that for him. It's no the Professor's fault."

"Oh, I dare say you get enough! She doesn't like your stealing the methylated spirit, I suppose. Well, I'm going in for lunch. See you later, Dad."

"Yes, yes, my boy. I've had breakfast."

Bertie laughed as he went out. "Off the track as usual! He is a dreamy old chap. Growing a bit whiter. I wonder if Sandy will really go. I'm going in by the kitchen to scare Davida. I've a good mind to brain Bethia. Little fool!"

He went bounding off, and went in by the back entrance to the kitchen, whence Molly heard presently a startled scream. She herself felt in a maze of doubt and bewilderment. Not that she did not believe Bertie's explanation; and it had brought her, indeed, a shock of mingled pleasure and pain. The pleasure had faded into pain, almost before experienced. Neil had loved her enough, then, to do this generous deed for her sake—and to say nothing of it—he had loved her enough *then*! But if Bertie was not the thief, who was? She had been the means of Lord Cantyre's sending away the detective; she ought to tell the earl at once, she thought, that Bertie had not been guilty, that they had all been on the wrong track



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all the time. She would write, or send for him, at once. It did not then occur to her mind to revert to Bertie's odd words regarding Eve. He was given to unreasoning prejudices, to believing idle stories. She was used to listening patiently, and to giving no credence at all to Master Bertie's views. The States and success had not changed him. Deep down in Molly's heart, though she never owned it, she knew her brother to be shallow and selfish. She had shrunk and winced at his treatment of her own trouble. She must manage to make him believe that it was a case of mutual change. He was quite capable of writing fiery and angry letters—her face burned at the thought—there was not much gratitude in his composition; there rarely is in selfish people. Gratitude is a rarer virtue than some would have us believe, and our memory is apt to be a short one where other people's goodness to ourselves is concerned. We are not so apt to forget those favours we ourselves bestow.

CHAPTER XXIV

A Deception Unveiled

Bertie disappeared immediately after lunch, saying that he had business in town and a good many people to see, and Molly and he had lunched alone. Bethia had mentioned that Eve had left a message that she might be late, and that they were not to wait for her, so that the things were cleared away as usual, and Molly went out, returning about dusk. Eve was not back, which surprised her a little, and when she went into the drawing-room she found her brother ensconced there by a good fire, the bright day having turned cold. He asked her to ring for tea at once, and when it came, took up his usual "lord-of-creation" attitude on the rug, his cup on the mantel-piece. When Molly looked up he was regarding her rather magisterially; Bertie was wont to assume an expression of great majesty on occasion, especially when he had any thing to say which he thought ought to reduce his sister into a condition of meek subserviency.

"You don't seem at all curious, Molly, about what I am going to tell you regarding your friend," he began.



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"What do you mean by my 'friend'? Do you mean Eve?" Molly said. "I hope you are not going to tell me anything disagreeable, Bertie. You know I never believe idle gossip. I love Eve, and I always shall love her. And I don't believe things against people I love."

"Oh, you needn't tell me, Molly, what a little goose you are!" he replied contemptuously. "Everyone knows that you inherit the governor's weakness. He would always allow any fool to walk over him. And, of course, I know that both you and he were born to be sat upon. But I think when I tell you what I have got to say, you will see that you have been pretty well taken in. We have all been taken in, in fact, not only you."

"Taken in!" Molly ejaculated. "What do you mean, Bertie? Who has taken us in?"

"Eve has. This precious cousin of yours of whom you are so fond. Why, Molly, she isn't your cousin at all!"

Molly threw back her head at that, and laughed lightly and carelessly. She was not at all put out by this astounding statement, she did not attach to it one ray of credence.

"Bertie, I do wish that you wouldn't listen to every ridiculous story you hear," she said. "You know you have heard wild things about people before—there was that story about old Colonel Maple."

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"Look here, Molly, I want no cheek!" Bertie cried angrily; "and I want no tomfoolery! As to believing things, you have shown already this forenoon that you were ready enough to believe a cock-and-bull story about me, and I think you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Bertie was so angry that he paced the room indignantly for a few moments after this to let his words sink deep into Molly's soul, and then he continued magnificently: "But I am willing to overlook that, and to forgive and forget, because you are my sister, when all is said and done. But you will oblige me now if you will listen to a clear statement of fact. That is all I ask."

"I am very ready to listen, Bertie," Molly said patiently. There was even a slight tinge of surprise in her face as she turned it upon him, for there was something in his tone which struck her as new. And then Bertie continued, coming up to the mantel-piece and leaning his elbow upon it.

"When I was in America, I met a lady in New York who knew our real cousin, Eve Luttrell, and of course she asked me about her—if she had returned from Egypt, and how she had enjoyed it? I said we could not be talking of the same person, for Eve Luttrell, our cousin, was staying with you and the governor now, at St. Rule's, and never had been to Egypt as far as I knew. We were at cross

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purposes for some time, and then I happened to say what a very good-looking girl Eve was, and she burst out laughing, and said she didn't think much of my taste. 'In the States', she said, 'Miss Luttrell was considered rather plain, although she dressed so well, and was so altogether smart and up-to-date that she had a great vogue.' I couldn't get over that, and we quite quarrelled over it, till she said she would show me a photograph the next time we met. She sent it just before we left, and, Molly, it wasn't the same girl at all!"

He paused then, looking at Molly with much fixed concentration, but her expression was only of the blankest amazement. But for the fear of annoying Bertie again, indeed, she would have laughed once more. His dramatic pause was so very intense.

"There must be some mistake, Bertie; it is quite possible that there are two Luttrells in New York. Of course Eve has never been to Egypt, I know she has not, because one day she and I were wishing that we could go together. But I know that a friend of hers is there just now, for I have seen Cairo stamps on Eve's letters."

"You won't believe, Molly, but you will have to," Bertie said oracularly then. "This is some plot, some deeply-laid plot, and the girl who is here isn't our cousin at all! I couldn't stay to

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fight it out with Mrs. Beresford, or to make any more enquiries, but I have been saying to myself all the way coming home that there is something underneath this which wants looking into. She is a very handsome girl, whoever she is, and I don't say but that she is rather a fascinating one—not that she ever caught me in her toils." Bertie pulled up his collar with dignity. "But at the same time there was always something about her that I didn't understand. She never would talk of the States. She hadn't any accent. She never would talk of her relations. She got off very easily here, because my father had evidently had some row with hers, but I have heard him say something about his brother, and she always skated away from the subject. Of course the governor never saw anything, he wouldn't notice a church before his nose, but I did, and I used to wonder. And there's another thing, Molly, she knew more about that diamond than you think. I am half beginning to believe that she took it. There!"

Molly was thinking deeply; not that she believed anything of the story at all, but she was puzzling as to how the mistake could have arisen. Bertie thought that he had made a deep impression, and he continued, his eyes fixed on hers:

"There are one or two things that I remembered afterwards, on thinking the matter over. You don't



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think much of my sense, Molly, I know, but some people consider I am sharp enough for all that, and I have one or two little clues which I think might be worked up against Miss Eve. The first is, that she had as much chance as I to take the diamond that afternoon when you were all in the kitchen. She went for a smelling-bottle, she said — did she ever bring it?"

"Yes, Bertie."

"Well, she had time enough, smelling-bottle included, to go and nip up the diamond. Of that I am sure. You were ready enough to suspect me. I'd like to know why you never thought of her?"

Molly made no reply to this indignant question. She knew that it was useless to reply to Bertie in this mood, and he continued determinedly:

"That's clue number one. She could have taken the diamond. Clue number two. What was she doing in the garden late that night?"

"I didn't know that she was in the garden late that night, Bertie. How do you know?"

"Because I saw her coming in. I was late, as you may remember. I had gone to Cameron's, and we sat late, talking about this business of his loan to me. When I got back I let myself in with my key, and went to the drawing-room for something to eat and drink. The fire was almost out, and I was just about to turn up the gas, when she, Eve,

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came in by the French window, still in her evening dress, with a shawl over her shoulders. She told me some cock-and-bull story—you know how ready she was at that—about going into the garden to look for a ghost. Of course I didn't believe it, but I never thought then that she had anything to do with the diamond."

"I don't believe she had, Bertie. I don't believe it for a single moment," Molly said with resolute patience. "All this I am sure could be explained."

"Oh yes! she could explain anything to you. She could twist you round her little finger, I don't doubt," Bertie cried savagely, intensely irritated by her refusal to be impressed, or even in the slightest degree suspicious. "But I am the head of the house, for my father, of course, is no use at all, and I intend that Miss Eve Luttrell, as she calls herself, shall give me a pretty full explanation. I shall want to know, first of all, who she really is, then I shall want satisfaction about that diamond. The more I think of it, Molly, the more furious I feel. If you and she got Cantyre to send off that detective,—and that is a pretty suspicious circumstance against her,—you will be so kind as to tell him that you were mistaken, and I shall be obliged to him to get his detective back to work out this precious matter till the guilty person is brought to light. I don't intend to lie under suspicion."



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Bertie was crimson with anger. "And I mean to put things on a satisfactory footing before I leave this house."

Molly had heard her brother assume this hectoring tone before. He usually employed it to her and Davida; Davida called it "one of his tantrums"; but Molly had never seen him quite so fiercely determined, and she felt troubled and vaguely uneasy. When Eve returned he would probably rush into accusations which would be humiliating to think of afterwards. What should she do? Should she manage to see her cousin first, and tell her of this strange story, this strange hallucination? What if Eve were to walk into the room now, and Bertie were to begin without any preamble?

Even as she thought, the front-door bell pealed through the house, and she started almost guiltily, rising to her feet with a vague impulse to leave the room. But Bertie laid his hand determinedly upon her shoulder, and pushed her gently back into the ingle-neuk.

"Sit still where you are, Molly. If this is Eve Luttrell, let her come in here."

"She would not ring, Bertie," Molly had begun, when the door opened and Bethia announced "Mr. Neil Cameron."

He came forward quickly, his face rather paler

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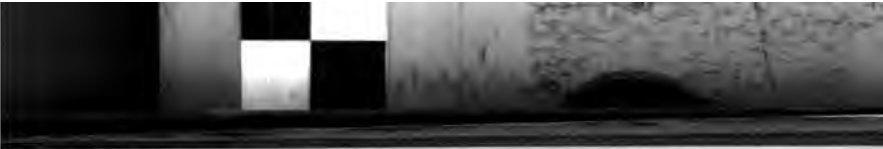
than usual, and his look half-anxious, half-apprehensive, as Bertie could see. The look took in Molly at once, and seemed to see only her. She had risen, and now gave him her hand very calmly, though all the blood had left her face. How her heart was beating she only knew.

"I ventured to call, Molly," he said rather low, "in answer to a note I had from your father. I am on my way to India. I have an appointment there in one of the colleges, and I was in St. Rule's for a few hours to gather my belongings together. Your father had written to ask me about a certain piece of valuable apparatus which he had lent to Professor Mainwaring. I could not very well explain by letter."

He broke off then, searching her features still with eager, yearning eyes. He could see that the little face was even smaller, that she was very pale, that though she was apparently quite self-possessed, there was something gone from her face which had been one of its chief charms; the knowledge of this cut into his consciousness like a knife. If he could have stopped away!

"We are very pleased to see you," Molly said gently then. "Bertie has just come home from the States. I will go and tell my father that you are here."

"I think I'd wait a bit, Molly," Bertie said



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then, drawing himself up. He did not at all care to be overlooked, and he resented fiercely that Cameron had seemed to have no eyes for anyone but his sister, though he had, on his side, studiously avoided seeing his old friend's outstretched hand. "There are one or two things that I should like to speak to Mr. Cameron about. If you won't give me any explanation as to this breaking off of your engagement, perhaps he will."

"Bertie!"

The tone of anguish, of appeal, and yet of command, were all so co-mingled that he turned upon her as if arrested. Molly's eyes were blazing, there was a bright flush, a red stain of colour on either pale cheek.

"I forbid you to proceed any farther," she said very low, but with erect head. "The breaking of our engagement lies between Mr. Cameron and me. No one else in the world has anything to do with it. I forbid you to say any more."

When once a gentle nature is fairly aroused, the result is apt to be rather surprising, and Bertie was checked into silence now; he yielded with a bad grace.

"It seems to me," he said sulkily, "that I have come home to be treated like a school-boy. But I don't intend that to continue, Molly, and so I tell you. If you take it like this, of course I can

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say no more upon the matter—at least not now. You and Cameron can please yourselves." And then suddenly a thought seemed to strike him, and he turned round upon the other man indignantly. "You never told her about lending me that money, Cameron,—and what do you think she got into her head in consequence?"

It was no use to try to stop him, Molly could only wait with her hands clenched in her lap. The cup of her humiliation seemed full.

"She thought that I had taken the diamond! Her own brother!" Cameron had turned his grave, pitying eyes involuntarily upon Molly's face. So she had thought that, and borne it alone! It was curious, indeed, he thought now, that he had never guessed that her suspicions might turn in this direction.

"A pretty thing for a sister to suspect, wasn't it?" Bertie cried. "She owned it without blushing too; and yet when I tell her what seems to me to be a very ugly and suspicious story about Eve Luttrell, she refuses to listen to it at all. You never know when you have a girl!"

Molly could see his quick start, his quick, flashing look, and her heart seemed to sicken within her. How he would despise Bertie! How cold and scornful would be his look if her brother proceeded farther!

A Deception Unveiled

"What story have you heard about Miss Luttrell?" Cameron said slowly, and as if speaking almost unconsciously. "Do you mean in the States, or here in St. Rule's? People are apt to gossip in St. Rule's. I don't think, if I were you, Bertie, that I should give much credence to any gossip."

"Oh no, of course not! There is no credence to be laid upon any story about anyone except me!" the young man cried. "But you are a man, Cameron; a man isn't so easily taken in as a girl. So perhaps when you hear my story you will not be quite so cock-sure! I suppose she took you in too, and that you admired her? Most men did. But you will be rather surprised to learn that she isn't Eve Luttrell at all! I won't be quiet, Molly. Did you hear, Cameron?"

"I don't think I understood," the other said, it must be owned, a trifle contemptuously.

"Don't you understand English?" Bertie repeated then, more loudly than ever. "She isn't Eve Luttrell at all!"

And just then the door opened, and Eve herself, followed by Cantyre, walked slowly into the room. They turned, all three, and looked at her.

CHAPTER XXV

Eve tells her Story

She had heard. That was quite apparent. They looked at her, all of them, a variety of painful expression in each face. Bertie alone remained unmoved, righteously indignant. So might a judge look upon the bench, before a detected criminal on whom he was about to pronounce sentence of unswerving justice. It quite inflated Bertie, indeed, to feel so delightfully self-righteous; the position was one of importance. He, the acting head of the family, had detected this tissue of deceit, and he meant to lay it bare before all the world. Eve had never much admired Bertie; there had always been something faintly scornful in her tone, at which his self-conceit had chafed fiercely. Now was the time for avenging, the time for showing her up in her true colours!

"I think I heard you mention my name, Bertie, as we came in?" she said slowly, seating herself on a chair in the centre of the room where she could face them all. "I believe I heard you say that I 'was not Eve Luttrell at all'?" She drew off

Eve tells her Story

her *suede* gloves deliberately and stretched them across her knee. "You have only forestalled something that I was about to say myself, though probably I had not anticipated quite so large an audience." She looked at him with a faint smile then. "It seems hardly fair to come upon you just now and spoil your *dénouement*, does it? To take the chief rôle from you."

"You are very clever," he said, "at twisting things up in words, I have noticed that before, but we don't want that kind of thing now. We want a simple and clear explanation of what all this means. I, representing my father, who is as easily gulled as a baby, demand an explanation. I have to look after Molly, who is little better than he, where worldly matters are concerned. It has been a tissue of deceit!"

"Poor Molly!"

Eve looked over at Molly, still with that faintly mocking smile. Her face was quite colourless, but she had never looked more beautiful, and her hazel eyes were bright and hard and resolute. Molly was silent, gazing in wild-eyed amazement. Why did not Eve answer his accusations, coldly and scornfully? She made a faint movement to go over to her friend, but Eve held up her hand as if to ward her off.

"No, Molly, please don't come yet. I want

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to answer Bertie, and tell you all the truth at last. Lord Cantyre knows it. We are going to be married—he and I—to-morrow, in Edinburgh, and I told him the whole story before I promised."

"I should like to be sure of that," Bertie cried then. "It is all very well to take this tone—"

"Somebody will take a tone towards you that you won't care about, young man, presently!" Cantyre cried then, starting suddenly to his feet; but Eve only laughed, putting her hand under his arm and pulling him gently back.

"Don't be foolish, Lord Cantyre," she said. "We don't want any heroics, and Bertie shall be perfectly satisfied that you are quite aware of the danger you are running, be sure of that. Molly, it is to you after all, and only to you, that I owe the story. For it is true, Molly, that I have deceived you. I have lived here all these months under a false name, I have taken your love and your friendship under a false name. It has all been a tissue of deceit, as Bertie eloquently says, for I am not Eve Luttrell at all!"

Molly gave a little gasp, but the hazel eyes seemed to beg her silence, and Eve resumed, stretching the gloves across her knee with a monotonous movement.

Eve tells her Story

"I need not go back now, to tell you all my story. My real name is Evelyn—Evelyn Raymond, and I have led a wandering life, travelling to and fro from continental towns to London with my uncle, who is what is generally called a reprobate. He used to win money at cards. I think he has been in prison. He has been both an actor and a singer in his time. My mother was his sister, but she was very unlike him, and my father was an English gentleman, an artist, who died in poverty in Rome. That is all I need tell you about them. I was desperately unhappy always with Uncle Geoff; but there didn't seem to be anything particular to do, or any other niche in the world for me, so I stayed on with him, till someone heard my voice in Paris, and said I ought to train as a singer. We came to London, where I studied for a year at the Guildhall, and then suddenly my voice broke down, and the doctor said I must go away for a year, and rest. I was desperate, Uncle Geoff was furious. He wanted me to go and dance at the Gaiety, and I would not, and it was just then that I met a young American girl who had come to the class with a friend. She was a Miss Eve Luttrell, who had just arrived from the States, and one day she told me that she was going down to Scotland, by the directions of her father's will, to stay for a year with a Scots Professor and his daughter. She

friends, and, I think, then
I laughed, and said I only.
She suggested then, suddenly,
we arranged a little scheme
here, in her place; I would
she would write letters to
post them from St. Rule's
went off, without saying
I came here, and it has
all my life. I ought to
course, as Bertie will tell
transgression ought to be
not hard at all, Molly, a
sunshine and flowers!—
Rule's—and of Molly!"

There was a deep silence
'a storm of varying thoughts
who listened—so varied
them into silence.

Cameron's hand was
overwhelmed. She had



Eve tells her Story

As for Molly, she seemed to be waiting for more, her eyes fixed on Eve's face.

"Are you very angry, Molly? I can let you speak now," Eve said slowly. "I would rather that you would speak and condemn me, as Bertie has done. That would make it so much easier for me. Speak out, Molly. Tell me you will never see me, or think of me again."

They looked into each other's eyes for a moment, Eve faintly smiling, and then Molly rose and went over to the arm-chair. Her eyes were very soft and tender.

"It was a little hard to believe," she said; "I would not have believed the story from anyone but you, Eve. But there is a great, great deal behind your words that you have not told us, and I feel as if I could think of nothing but that you were very unhappy all your life, and that we made you happy here. I can't quite disconnect the two in my own mind—the Eve I loved, the Eve I love still!"

"Did I not tell you that, Molly?" The girls rose then, and went over to the window. "Don't you remember my saying that we were four or five personalities all in one?"

Bertie had remained silent thus far, with difficulty. He had made a furious movement when Molly went across the room, and when presently

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she slid her hand under Eve's arm, and, passing into the library, shut the door, he turned round upon Cameron almost fiercely.

"Did you ever hear such a story, Cameron? To think that she has lived here all this time on false pretences! And Molly! To see Molly behaving like this—passing it over as if it were nothing—making light of it! It is perfectly outrageous!"

"Molly has certainly a reprehensible way of forgiving people," Cameron said slowly. "She possesses one of those unique natures which seems to find forgiveness easy, and anger and resentment and all uncharitableness very difficult. I shouldn't have fancied, however, Bertie, that you would be the one to blame her for that. Indeed, your attitude in this rather surprises me."

"It doesn't surprise me," Cantyre broke in then irrepressibly. "I am under your roof, Luttrell, or I'd give you a piece of my mind. And I'll thank you to remember, in speaking of Miss Luttrell—I beg your pardon—Miss Raymond, that she has done me the honour to promise to be my wife. You will remember the fact, if you please."

Cameron turned away sharply towards the window.

"She told me this story this afternoon," Cantyre resumed, "and she wanted to break the whole thing

Eve tells her Story

off, but I—what the deuce did it matter to me, after all? It wasn't so deadly a crime; it doesn't alter my love for her a jot—no, nor my admiration! After all, who are we that we should cast stones at her? Are we all so very immaculate? By Jove!" Cantyre cried, working himself gradually into a passion. "Who are you that you should cast a stone? I'd like to know who set you up to be a judge and lawgiver? Are you such a righteous person yourself?"

"This is my house, or rather my father's house," Bertie cried in answer, "and it was my place to get at the truth, that's all! She was living here under false pretences, and I don't choose that anyone shall do that!"

Cameron came between them then, as the two young men approached each other menacingly, and he interposed the square bulk of his shoulder with a slight smile.

"I don't think that we had better pursue this subject," he said slowly; "I don't think that it is at all necessary to say anything more about it. After all, as Miss Raymond has said, her explanation was only due to Molly, and has been given to Molly. I don't see that you and I, Luttrell, have anything to say."

"But I have something else to say on another subject to Lord Cantyre," Bertie cried then, be-

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ginning to pace the floor with his passionate step. "If I am to be hushed up about this, and made to hold my tongue in my own house, like a naughty school-boy, I have at least got something to say in another direction. I hear from my sister, Lord Cantyre, that you and your detective did me the honour to suspect me of stealing the diamond, and that by her request, and that of Miss Raymond, you sent the man away and hushed the thing up. Well, I have to tell you that you are on the wrong tack, that's all, for I didn't take the diamond, and I should recommend you to find out who did. You suspected me, I believe, because of a little business in Oxford, and because you couldn't conceive how I managed to get the money. Cameron, here, will tell you how I got the money, and you can pass on the explanation to your cute detective."

Lord Cantyre had listened to this final outburst, a silent curiosity tempering the anger of his good-natured face, and he turned then to Cameron instinctively.

"I was able to lend Luttrell the money to pay his Oxford debt," Cameron said briefly. "I did not know that Bertie was under suspicion through that, or I should have mentioned the fact. Was this the reason that you sent the man away?"

"Well, yes, it was," Cantyre said rather awk-

Eve tells her Story

wardly. "Miss Luttrell spoke to me about it, and it was for her sake, and for his sister's—"

Bertie laughed out at that, harshly. "Oh, you needn't mind mentioning that you'd have taken me up with pleasure!" he said. "I'm awfully much obliged to you, I'm sure. But since we are on the subject of the diamond, I really would advise you to get a detective back again, and to have the thing properly dealt with. It doesn't do to go on suspecting the wrong people. I really think that I would see about it, and before I got married—if I were you!" and then, as if half afraid of the effect of this last taunt, the boy swung out of the room and left the two men together.

"What does he mean by that? What a hateful young cub he is!" broke from Cantyre irrepressibly. "If it hadn't been that it was the dear old Professor's house, and that the girls were present, I should like to have punched his head, Cameron! Shouldn't you? Luttrell, with that holy self-righteousness! Luttrell sitting as judge and accuser! Oh, upon my word it makes me laugh to think of it! But I say, I have wondered all along, ever since he spoke, who could have taken the diamond."

"I should have it sifted to the bottom, Lord Cantyre," Cameron said rather wearily. "I think it would be best for everyone concerned."

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He was feeling dazed still, and in a kind of dream. He was longing to get away and think it all out, to get accustomed to this new outlook, to an horizon in which the dawn of hope could never rise again. She was to be Cantyre's wife, she was not the girl he had thought at all. She was someone who could deceive deliberately, easily, continuously. Somehow as yet he could only realize that. Eve was right. Cameron had idealized her. And when this searching light of disillusionment had flashed over that which he had pictured, he felt that he had loved what was not there at all: she was only a vision of his fancy.

He had come to say good-bye to Molly. He thought of her with a little stab, and then he remembered that perhaps Cantyre would think him remiss, and he turned towards him with a great effort.

"We have forgotten to congratulate you, Lord Cantyre," he said slowly. "She is very beautiful. I hope that you will both be very happy."

"Thank you awfully! I don't hope, I know," Cantyre cried joyfully, his face clearing then; "anyone would be happy with her. She's—she's perfectly splendid, and though she is awfully clever, she never makes one feel stupid. She's so full of surprises, too. I think, after all, that's a great charm about a woman; don't you? Eve

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would never bore anyone. Bore! The very word is ridiculous in connection with her."

So full of surprises! Cameron almost laughed as he heard, harshly and terribly. Yes, she had been full of surprises, and this last surprise was like to break his heart.

"We go up to London, and then to the Continent for a bit, but I'll send Marsland down here to take charge of the diamond investigation," Cantyre said then. "We are to be married in St. Giles' Cathedral to-morrow, Cameron. She is going to-night to an old aunt of mine near Edinburgh. I should be awfully glad, and so would she, if you would be present at the ceremony—would you?"

"I am afraid not. I have to go up to London at once to make my preparations," Cameron said hastily; and then he looked towards the door as the two girls entered.

"We must be going now, if we are to catch our train," Eve said, looking at Cantyre, "and I want to say good-bye to Davida in the kitchen. Molly and I have said good-bye. Molly has forgiven me, because—oh well, because she is Molly! Good-bye, Mr. Cameron! I hear you are going to India."

Cantyre had gone over to the fireplace, where he was talking eagerly to his hostess, thanking her

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most gratefully, Cameron could hear, and then, quite wordlessly on either part, Eve held out her hand. It was a strange clasp, cold and lifeless, and then the girl looked up at him with a strangely pleading glance.

"I didn't tell you all the story," she said slowly. "There was a good deal behind it that will never be told, just as there is a great deal in life that will never be told. I have had a very happy year, which I shall remember all my life; but I don't think I shall ever come back to St. Rule's. Good-bye!"

Had he nothing to say, absolutely nothing? Or was there so much that the words, flooding to his lips, choked each other?—that the pain, surging in his heart, was voiceless and despairing?

Eve had turned away, and Cantyre came to her side at once.

So these two parted!



CHAPTER XXVI

A New Bewilderment

June had come, and the Luttrells' garden was full of leaf and fragrance. All the old-fashioned flowers, pansies, sweet-william, mignonette, lupins, columbines, lilies, daisies, were ripe, and the walk bordered by the white Scottish roses would soon be a scented paradise. And if the "flourish" was gone, and the lilac and the laburnum, spring had so lately passed, that her footpaths were still redolent with that delicate fragrance which is hers, and hers alone. Davida, coming down from the house, a basket of wooden pins over her arm, walked over rifts of fading yellow leaves from the laburnum-tree—"June's palace paved with gold"—and heeded that not at all.

For Davida was not in a cheerful mood, and even the sweet and peaceful old garden did not soothe her jarred nerves. She had eyes and did not see, ears and did not hear. Things had not

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gone well with Davida lately. For one thing, Molly had not been strong—her engagement was broken off, which the old servant bitterly resented—and Master Bertie was still favouring them with the light of his presence, a captious, cross, and extravagant presence, which always tended to provoke Davida to wrath. Bethia, too, had been specially ill-doing. She had a lover now, and lovers were beings whom Davida abhorred with all her soul, and would fain have banished once and for all from the universe.

“Ance gie a lassie a man at her tails, and fareweel to a’ hope o’ ony guid work,” she had remarked to Bethia that very day. “Ye niver were o’ muckle use, Bethia M’Lean; ye’re less than iver noo. Your thochts are on onything but your ain work. I speak tae the wa’ when I speak tae you, and a lick-and-a-promise cleaning and washing o’ my cups and saucers is a’ I get oot o’ ye. The suner yon plumber o’ yours sets ye up i’ your ain hoose the better for me and the waur for him. Ye can waste his goods and groceries then instead o’ your maister’s, and pour half a pound o’ his starch ilka day doon the kitchen sink if ye like, but I dinna think ye will. It’s wonderfu’ how careful wasterfu’ folks can be o’ their ain goods.”



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To which outburst Bethia only tossed her head.

Davida, hanging out some delicate lawn and laces on ropes slung over the soft green grass, was meditating deeply and not very happily, her thoughts taking a wide range.

“I said to mysel’ mischief would come wi’ that lassie, and mischief did come. Miss Molly never seed it—naebody seed it, but I kent that whenever Mr. Cameron set eyes on her he was glamourous. I’m no saying but she had a kind o’ glamour. I’ve felt it mysel’. There was something i’ the glint o’ her e’e, and in her laugh,—a bonnie laugh is real takin’,—that I never saw the equal o’. ‘Davida,’ she would say, ‘Ye think me an awfu’ sinner, but sinners ha’e their uses, Davida. They mak’ the guid folk shine a’ the better. They teach the guid folk patience and long-suffering, Davida, Sae try and be lang-suffering wi’ me.’ She kent, the hizzie, nane better, that I likit her fine! But she stole Miss Molly’s man, and my darlin’ has a sair heart this day, because o’ her. She’ll never own it, and she winna even let Bertie say a word tae Miss Eve’s discredit. He’s a feckless, fusionless fule! I wish he was aff on his play-actin’. It’s a’ he’s fit for! And then there’s this maitter o’ the diamond. I wish tae goodness they would lay

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their finger on the thief. This Marsland, coming till his tea the day—what's that?"

Stooping to pick up a pin, Davida was aware of a soft whistle on the wall, and, looking up, espied, to her wrath, three closely-cut heads surveying her audaciously over the red brick addition, mellowed now by time, which the Professor had added, for the sake of his fruit-trees, to the old gray wall which divided his estate from the College Hall garden.

Behind the buttresses of red brick, and seated comfortably on the wide gray wall, the "Hall laddies" as she disrespectfully called them, were apt to spend a good deal of their time in the summer session, and a favourite pastime was to tease and chaff Davida whenever they caught sight of her.

"Davida! Dear Davida, would you kindly—"

"I'll 'Davida' you. I'd have you to ken, Lord Strathyre, that I ha'e a last name, as weel as your lordship."

"I'm so sorry! A thousand apologies! I bow myself in the dust. M'Intosh of M'Intosh, isn't it? But don't be angry. We call all celebrities by their Christian names. Queen Victoria, you know, and Florence Nightingale, and Jeanie Geddes, and all the rest. Miss Davida, won't

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you hand us back that ball? See, it is yonder on the path. How are you, Davida? You look blooming! Like any rose in the garden! A rose by any name, even that of Davida, would smell as sweet."

"I'd ha'e you to learn, sir, or my lord, or whatever they like tae ca' ye, that my time is no' to be spent here picking up your ba's, or havering wi' you! The suner you and the rest o' you gangs on wi' your lessons—"

"Our lessons! Ludlow, do you hear? Go on with your lessons. Go on with your multiplication table, Jasper Carew."

"The better for you, and for the money your parents spends on your education. And as for the professors—"

"Yes, what about the professors, Davida?"

"They are no' paid tae teach folk as spends their time smoking and idling on ither folks' wa's."

"But, fair lady, sweet lady, may I point out that this is our wa'. Owned, that is to say, by our worthy warden."

"But this is oor garden! You ha'e nae business tae look intil oor garden! If I was tae tell the Professor—"

"Dear old Luttrell! Do, Davida."

Ludlow, gaily flinging his cigarette into the

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Luttrell gooseberry-bushes, kissed his fingers airily to his enraged listener.

"He wouldn't listen, Davida, as you well know. Strathyre, go on with your 'lessons', and don't interrupt. I want to ask you, Davie, dear—do your familiars call you Davie, for short?—about this wonderful diamond. Lord Cantyre is honeymooning in Paris, we hear, but there was a rumour that the diamond search was to be gone on with. Is that the case?"

"My betters dinna' tell me their intentions," Davida said sourly, pinning up a wonderful piece of yellow old lace. "When they dae consult me, I'll maybe ha'e time tae haver ower the wa' wi' you. No till then."

"But we have no wish to 'haver'. We would fain talk sense," Lord Strathyre said. "Don't mind Ludlow, Davida. He is English, and all English people are idiots, as you know. You tell me. I am Scots, pure Scots. Who do you think took the diamond, Davida?"

"I wish I kent," Davida said, trapped for once into a certain amount of placability.

"Really! Haven't you the least idea?"

The voice was persistent and engaging, and in spite of herself Davida was intensely curious about the diamond; it was rarely, too, that she allowed

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herself the pleasure of discussing the affair. She looked up at the row of innocent faces now, her own a little curious.

"You young felleys," she began slowly; "you should hear a' the gentry say. What div they think?"

"Ludlow, what do the 'gentry' say?"

"Well, of course, there was the mysterious glazier, who came to repair the cracked pane. And I have heard that one theory is that the Professor hid the jewel about himself, somewhere, absent-mindedly. That is a theory one or two strongly hold to."

"Then they haud till a lee!"

"How do you know, Davida? You express yourself with some force."

"As I weel may. I ken, because I thocht o' that mysel', and searched every bit o' his claithes that nicht."

"I call that a thoroughly sensible thing to do. A great brain yours, Davida! What do you fancy the Professor's family think of this business? Hulloo! This isn't the Professor, is it? Look, Davida, coming down the path."

"It's his bottle-washer," Davida said scornfully. "It's a pity you should be sae short-sighted, my lord."

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"I'm sure I beg his pardon. But great geniuses always dress badly. Well, *au revoir*, Davida. For I see the gentleman has business with you, and there goes our luncheon gong. Fare ye well, fair lady, fare ye well!"

They blew kisses to her, all three, and then the old woman heard peals of laughter as the young men disappeared over the red brick with its fringe of waving green leaves. She looked round sourly to greet Sandy, who was advancing towards her, attired in his best clothes. The clothes, indeed, were so good that Davida gazed at him in some curiosity. Had he been getting a large advance from the Professor? Her suspicious wrath rose at once. It was never far from the surface in Sandy's presence.

"Hae ye onything particular tae say tae me, Sandy?" she queried sharply. "For I am late as it is, and the Professor's soup is no on the fire."

"It's gey partceekler." Sandy's tone was almost sepulchral. "For it's fareweel! 'Fare ye weel, and if for ever, then for ever fare ye weel.' Ha'e ye heard that song, Davida? Robbie Burns, I'm thinkin'. Maybe no, maybe Byron. He was a daft regairdless chap, that Byron, wi' nae religion. And I was thinkin'—"



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"I canna bide here tae listen tae ye, Sandy," Davida said, taking up her basket. "I've heard enough havers the day wi' they College Ha' laddies. What div ye mean by fareweels. Whaur are ye aff till? Cupar?"

"Cupar!" Sandy's scorn was magnificent. "I'm off tae the United States. Americky. I sail frae Glasgow the morn. I'm going tae my brither, wha's starting a new gowf factory i' New York. I'm tae be his manager."

Was it true? Davida stood still as if arrested, looking him over. He certainly looked well-dressed and quite sober. Was this thorn in her side really about to be removed?

"Well," she said slowly, "if ye like tae keep frae drink I'm no saying but ye could get on. If drink and leeing were pit aside, I'll no say but ye hae the brains tae get on. But sae lang as ye drink and lee—as ye div here—ye'll fare nae better i' the States than in auld Scotland, and the kingdom o' Fife. Ye hae the brains; gie them a fair chance, and ye'll maybe cheat the jail and the poor's hoose yet."

"Hear till her!" Sandy turned up the whites of his eyes and then brought them down again to the green grass. "Weel, I mean to mak my fortune, Davida, and turn ower a new leaf. Aye,

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and I mean tae return. Sae long as you're no merrit—and there's no muckle chance o' that—I'll gie ye a ca' on my return. I never kent a lighter hand at pastry, or a better cook than you, Davida; I'll say that for ye. And ye might dae waur than end your days i' the States, as my cook. Fare ye weel! Ye hae stood i' my way noo and then, but I bear nae grudge. I'm looking for the Professor tae say good-bye till. He's no in the laboratory. You're looking fair dumbfoondered, Davida. But cheer up; as I say, I'll maybe return."

He chuckled and grinned wickedly as he strolled off, then, but it was a few moments before Davida could summon up sufficient energy to make her way into the kitchen. His cook! his cook! Sandy Forret's cook! She! Davida Forrester! It was really appalling the insolence, the audacity of the creature!

And then, lifting her basket and pausing to take a little parsley from the vegetable bed near the kitchen door, Davida entered the kitchen, just in time to catch Bethia enjoying a long chaffing talk with the butcher's boy. She delivered a warning to that damsel more denunciatory and lurid than usual. "For sure as I'm a leaving 'ooman," Davida wound up, "if the impudent folk o' this

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town gang on as they are going, there'll be some awfu' judgment descendin' on the world. The havers and the impidence I've been forced tae hear this day is enough to gar my hair turn white."

She fancied Sandy had preceded her through the white-rose path and had left by the kitchen. But Mr. Forret had only waited till she was gone to proceed—doubtless in search of the Professor—into the library.

Molly and her father had lunch together at half-past one, and the old man told Molly sorrowfully that Sandy had come to bid him farewell.

"I am really very sorry, Molly, my dear, extremely sorry. He was a very clever man—and, when sober, very useful to me. It is true that now and then he was rather unsteady—a little given to drink—but—"

"I think Sandy gave you a good deal of trouble, Dad," Molly said, "and if this young man Professor Mainwaring spoke to you about turns out satisfactory, I think the change will be for the better. Though Sandy was really amusing. He seemed a bit of the old times, too. One feels sorry to hear of him going in spite of all."

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The old times had, indeed, seemed to vanish of late more and more. With the glad coming of summer, change and sorrow seemed worse to bear. Molly had always associated summer with joy and light-heartedness, with meeting Neil by the gleaming sapphire sea, with sitting with him under the old trees in the garden, while the sun, dying above them in the west, left a lovely sky of apple-green tints with rosy clouds and suffused gold, seen through the interlacing branches. All had been sweet and restful and glad, as was her heart. It seemed strange to realize that one could meet summer with such a dull heartache—that one could find no beauty in the sapphire sea, in the green fields, in the rippling corn, in the gray walls, gold-flecked now, with that yellow wall-flower which is summer's rich gift to the sacred walls and broken arches of the great cathedral. Molly looked from all summer brought "to that it could not bring"—looked, and, sobbing, cried in the dark to that great Heart of Love which listens ever, in the dark as well as the light, to the cry of His stricken and helpless children.

"If it had not all come together," Molly would sometimes say to herself, she could have borne it better. But to lose Neil, and then to lose Eve.

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And the town's talk had galled and stung, for Bertie had told the story openly everywhere.

It had been a hard time; Bertie had made it doubly hard.

"Such a painful story, my dear Molly! We were so grieved to hear it from Bertie. Such an audacious thing to do! And in spite of all, Lord Cantyre could marry her! But the aristocracy, of course, think they can do anything. As I said to Belhaven, it is only a mercy she wasn't a tight-rope dancer. For he was really the kind of young man who was certain to do something extraordinary."

Molly's view they pronounced as really eccentric. She would not discuss the story—she would hear nothing against Eve. It was a position which exasperated many—which exasperated Bertie to fury.

"If you were a different sort of girl, one would think you were keeping in with the Countess of Cantyre!" he cried furiously one day, at which Molly merely smiled. "But I wash my hands of the whole matter! I wrote and told the trustee the story, and I hope and trust the real Eve Luttrell will get the wiggling she richly deserves. As for my father, he seems utterly incapable of realizing the thing. He merely murmured



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vaguely 'very reprehensible, of course—but she was an extremely intelligent and pretty young lady'. As if looks and intelligence matter in a case where such duplicity and deceit were concerned."

"What matters is that I love her," Molly said in her soft voice. "And that she was lonely and unhappy—and—and tempted. Bertie, we, 'who suffer being tempted', don't you think it might make us just a little more merciful?"

"I dislike preaching out of the pulpit, where one expects it," was all the answer she obtained however, and she said no more.

Bertie was to leave St. Rule's next day, but he had promised to be in for tea to meet Marsland, who was coming over from Edinburgh with the detective whom Lord Cantyre had engaged and sent down from London.

The case of the diamond was to be taken up, and, he hoped, brought to a more satisfactory conclusion than before. The two men arrived about five, and Bethia, very much chastened, showed them into the drawing-room, where, after tea, the old man joined them.

The story had, of course, been told at great length over tea, afterwards they were to show the new man the suite of rooms and passages, with

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their exits and entrances. He was not an ordinary detective, Cantyre had written, he was a gentleman, and they could trust him to do everything with the greatest tact and delicacy. It might be a long affair.

"As if one wanted delicacy in a detective," Bertie remarked. "What we want is the diamond to be found and the thief arrested. And then no more precious stones brought here for the Professor to give his opinion on! Do you hear, Molly?"

"I don't think we need be afraid," Molly said smilingly. They went into the study after tea, Bertie shutting both doors carefully—one opening into the passage which led to coach-house and stables, the other into the drawing-room. The Professor seated himself by the study table, littered as usual. Marsland was showing Mr. Campden the door leading into the garden, and the pane, new now, which the false glazier had come to mend. He opened and shut the door, Campden listening and watching.

"Is this door always left open, Miss Luttrell?"

"Not in winter. Then it is kept locked, and we rarely use it. But in summer it is always left open by day. My father often goes out and in by it from the laboratory to the coach-house and stables, where are a great many of his cases

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of minerals. I use this door myself too. At the time of the diamond's loss, however, it was kept locked. The false glazier had unlocked it."

"I see."

They went out then to the coach-house and stables, the detective making a little sketch and plan of the entire place, Bertie voluble, Marsland quiet, beside him.

"And when you last saw the diamond it was lying on that table over by the window, where that big microscope is?" Campden said, as they re-entered the library again after a pause. "Was the microscope in its present position then? Was it covered with that green baize? May I see? May I lift it?" He turned to the Professor, who nodded assent, then went up to the table.

"What is this?" he said then, quietly, turning round with something in his hand. "Have you placed a model here to show me?"

"A what?"

"A model of the stone!"

He advanced towards them calmly, holding out something in his hand; something which caught all the light from the window, and blazed and glittered. Something like a huge drop of liquid fire. Something which whitened the faces of all four on-lookers, and brought even the Professor



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to his feet with a great cry, and the only expletive they had any of them ever heard from his lips!

“Good God, man!” he cried, “IT IS THE DIAMOND!”

CHAPTER XXVII


Sandy's Letter

It was assuredly the diamond! They could be sure of that if of nothing else, and it was handed round from hand to hand, each face, each voice, an echo of the others' bewilderment.

As for the Professor, he sat down in his chair again, rumpling up his white hair, a picture of perplexity which it would be hard to equal. Even Marsland, the cool and the equable, allowed, with a laugh, that "this sort of thing beat cock-fighting".

"But something should be done." Bertie was the first to recover coherent speech. "We ought surely to do something. The thief, whoever took it, has been here. In this room. Who has been here, Molly?"

"No one that I know of," Molly said. "We can call Bethia and ask, but I am quite sure no one has called to-day. You passed out and in, Daddy, to the garden. But you did not, of course, see the diamond?"



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"The Pater would not have seen it if it had been hung up before his nose!" Bertie cried disrespectfully. "Upon my word, if the finding is going to be as great a mystery as the losing, one will say the thing was bewitched. But look here, I say, Marsland—we don't want any more Maske-lyne and Cook sort of business with it here. We don't want it to be walked off with again. Will you and Mr. Campden kindly take it out of this house and up to the bank. Take care it isn't twitched out of your pocket on the way!"

"That's not a bad suggestion," Marsland said, smiling. "And I can wire to Lord Cantyre at the Hotel Continental, Paris. I fancy they can't have started yet for Marseilles and Egypt. He will be pleased."

"And I can make a few enquiries of the maids," Campden said. "For his lordship's satisfaction it would be as well to know to whom we are obliged for the return of the diamond. It is certainly an odd affair."


Davida was out marketing, but Bethia was summoned, and, without being told anything, was asked if anyone had called that day and been admitted to the house. She said no. She had answered the door, Davida being out in the garden, and no one had even rung the bell. She had

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never been out of the house, though for a little she had been up in her mistress's room. And Bethia had dusted the library that day, and could take her oath that she had dusted the side-table and seen nothing particular there.

After which examination the detective and Marsland took their departure, and the diamond was safely lodged in the bank that night. And search for the restorer seemed to promise to be about as successful as the search for the thief!

Bertie left next day; he was due in Newcastle, where the tour with '*Pretty Pansy*' began, and, as he took care to inform Molly, whom he had never quite forgiven, "he had had about enough of St. Rule's. If this thing had even been satisfactorily cleared up," he said, "I wouldn't so much have minded, but it seems to be going to end in a hole-and-corner way, which is simply disgusting. The halfpenny evening papers are pleased to insinuate that one of us, Molly—one of us, you or I, or the Professor, or Marsland—took the diamond and replaced it! And that's a pleasant sort of insinuation. I asked Marsland if he wouldn't employ this man to go on tracking the thing, and he said No, it wasn't his business. And it seems Cantyre isn't bothering any more about it. Too



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busy honeymooning, I suppose. I don't want to spend money on the beastly affair or I'd do it myself. And I don't suppose you mind the papers."

"No, I don't think I do, Bertie," the girl said. "The diamond is found, and I know none of us took it. It is a mystery, but I dare say it will be explained some day. Somehow I think, as one grows older one grows to weigh things more truly—what are the real tragedies and sorrows of life, and what are the comparatively little ones. By and by this will all be forgotten, and if people did really ever suspect us they will forget that too."

Which was such a womanish and silly way of looking at things, Bertie said, that he was quite speechless. He departed in high dudgeon, the diamond's restorer having proved as mysterious as the diamond's thief.

Thus things rested for a little, and time passed on.

It was October again, and Molly had been thinking that it was just about this time last year that Eve had arrived in St. Rule's, when one day Bethia, answering the postman's bell as usual, brought a letter for Davida, which was left lying on the kitchen table till that good woman had

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time to read it; her epistles being few and far between, and not of much account.

Luncheon, however, being over, and the dishes and silver washed, Davida put on her spectacles and took up the envelope deliberately, Bethia, demurely seated with her work by the window, where she could see the yellow and red leaves of the great pear-tree by the laboratory wall, and a most tempting bunch of huge jargonelles hanging just above her head.

"I dinna ken the hand o' write," Davida remarked, as if rather puzzled, "and it's no an English stamp! I hae a cousin merriit on a Cupar man that gaed tae New York, but she niver wrote and I niver wrote. I canna keep up wi' folk as dinna find Scotland guid enough for them. Tak's me to write till folk here. What's this? 'My dear Davida.' It's no Marget Somers' write neither." She looked at the signature, and then was understood by Bethia to say wrathfully, she "liked his impidence writing tae her!"

Bethia enquired curiously and cautiously, "Wha's impidence, Davida?" but the old servant was engrossed, and paid her no heed. Davida read slowly and with difficulty, and Bethia was lost in her own thoughts, weighing the probabilities of being able to run out that night to the gate to meet a certain

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young man there, if Davida went up to Miss Molly's room and "bided", and she quite started at last, when, with a loud exclamation, Davida got to her feet and stood looking at Bethia over her spectacles with so awful and denunciatory an expression that the young handmaiden fairly trembled as she sat.

"Oh my goodness gracious me! The limmer!"

The words came out at last in a hoarse gasp.

"Wha, Davida? Your cousin?"

"And me niver tae suspek! I'll niver forgie mysel' in this world! Me that kent him! Me that said till I was tired, till the Professor, and till Miss Molly, forbye, that the man was a thieving ill-daeing, leeing scoondrel! Me that kent him! Me never tae suspek! Was I struck blind and deaf?"

"Wha is it, Davida? And what is it?"

But Davida paid her no heed; she did not indeed hear. With the letter in her hand she had marched upstairs to where Molly sat by her bedroom fire, having just come in, and she placed the letter in the girl's hand, with a kind of groan.

"Read that, Miss Molly! Read it aloud! And then tell me I'm the stupidest, maist feckless 'ooman you, or any other, ever set eyes on." Molly read as she was bidden. Davida's voice was so


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tragic that she dared not pause or question. And this is what she read:—

“212 Thirty-Seventh Street, New York.
Monday.

“My dear Davida,

“You would not expect, maybe, to get a letter from me, but nevertheless I take up my pen to tell you that I am well, hoping this finds you the same. We are neither of us as young as we once were, but there is good work in us still, and the Lord will provide.” [“Oh, the sinner!” Davida groaned at this point, “He fair gars me greet, but gang on Miss Molly.”] “As for me, you will please tell the Professor I have turned over a new leaf, and neither touch, taste, nor handle. The whisky here is something awful! It is double the price, and you might as well drink fusel oil! I was obliged to give it up—dear and bad is no for me. Dear Davida, I have something to tell you in this letter. It may as well be told, for I am never like to return, and I think you and the Professor and Miss Molly would like to ken. It was me as took the diamond, and me as pit it back. You should not rage, but hear how I did it. I had heard, like a’ the town, about it, but I had no intention of stealing it. I had come through the kitchen unknown, that day, seeing the door open, and you



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and Bethia being, I suppose, upstairs, and I went into the garden, meaning to see the Professor by hissel', if I could manage it, unknown to you. You will remember, Davida, you was never my friend with the Professor. He had sent me off for a wee, for reasons as is neither here nor there. Well, he was not in the laboratory, and I walked up till the hoose in the dark, thinking maybe I would catch him alone in the library. He was not there, as I could see, but by and by I heard an awfu' screeching, and I could see them all rushing out—the two young ladies and Mr. Bertie and the Earl. I wondered what it was, and I looked in at the window. There I saw the diamond lying on the table for me or ony ane to pick up. It cam' tae me quite sudden like that I would tak' it and sell it in Edinbury—a' of us being sinfu', as you weel ken, Davida, and liable to fall before temptation. Adam fell, and David. We all fall; but for grace, Davida, you micht fall yourself. Grace and an awfu' gude opeenion o' yoursel' saves you. But tae return to my tale. I gaed up till the door—the library door,—and to my michty surprise I foond it open, and the lock broken! I didna stay to think. I picked up the diamond, and then I opened the ither door, gaed through the passage till the big gate, hearing the Professor talking to some

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stranger in the coach-hoose, crept past, naebody seeing me, and then I gaed through the gate, oot till the front. Naebody saw me a' the time. I got oot till the lane, and there I saw Bethia fleeing up and yelling 'Fire!' and I kent what they had a' screeched for. I waited a while behind the trees in the lane, and then I gaed back wi' the plumbers and helped i' the kitchen tae redd up. Wha was to suspek me? Weel, there was an awfu' to dae, as ye ken, but naebody kent I had been in the hoose. I kept a calm sough, and by and by I gaed till Edinbury, and soonded a freend. But he just laughed at me! He said the diamond couldna be sold i' a' Scotland, or England either. It was kent, and naebody would daur buy it. He wouldna advance me a bawbee on it. It was a miserable failure! I got back and the Professor took me on again. There seemed naething tae dae but return the stone. But for lang I never got a chance o' putting it back, and I was feared. Then I made up my mind tae gang tae Americky, and you mind the day (my brither having sent me money for my passage) that I cam to say fare-weel? I gaed in by the library to get the Professor in the coach-house, and I just pit back the diamond on the table whaur I found it. It was quite simple. But it had made a grand opery!

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And that is a' I hae to say, Davida, at this time. Fare ye weel. Gie my respects to the Professor. There are few here as can talk wi' a scientific-minded man, like mysel', and I whiles miss a crack wi' him, and a whiff of the auld laboratory smells, but I am daing weel, and saving.

"Your obedient servant,

"SANDY FORRET."

"P.S.—You can mak' what use o' this letter that you like."

What could they say? What could anyone say? St. Rule's, like Davida, and like Bethia and Bertie and Eve and Cameron and Lord Cantyre, could only hold up their hands in amazement at their short-sightedness. But it is so easy to be wise after the event. The mystery seemed no mystery at all, once they had the key to it.

At the

It was three years later
diamond, and the diamond
had long ago died down
an exciting one, is, after
few people even referred
so exercised St. Rule's friends
over the walnuts and the
was a good after-dinner
Cantyre had never returned
The earl came for golf
countess seemed to have
little town of which she
ately fond. To some that

"It does not do to rev
after the lapse of time, Molly
in answer to Molly. "Do
I feel that I cannot come to
the little green town."

At the High Altar

the old faces seem to be slipping away. I like to think of it as I knew it, the old cobble-strewn streets, the harled outside stairs, where, over the crow-step gables and the Cathedral, we used to watch the curlews sweep and swirl with a flashing of white and silvery wings,—the gray broken towers, in winter with that powdered white, in summer bright with the sweet yellow wallflower. I never saw wallflower like it anywhere else; oh, the golden on the gray! Molly, do you remember showing me where Sir Walter cut the initials of his first love's name on the grass? And how he said it thrilled him still, old and gray-haired though he was. Do you remember, Molly? The sea was blue, oh, so blue and dazzling that day! and the grass was like an emerald, and the great sad towers rose around us everywhere, sheltering the dead below. I think of it often in my dreams, little Molly, and I see your face and hear your voice, but I dare not return. There are things better left undone, that is one. If I came back, only you would be unchanged. People who know how I came there (and the world has such a long memory, dear Molly, for anything that was weak and wicked) would stare and whisper. I must keep St. Rule's for my memory-pictures only—to hush myself to sleep with, to gaze at when I am alone."

A Mystery of St. Rule's

There were pictures of St. Rule's she did not write of—perhaps Molly guessed that. They never spoke of Cameron. They had heard nothing of him for three years. "I cannot tell her all in my heart," Eve said to herself, as she folded up her letter that day, "or the pictures that haunt me most. I cannot even say that one day I should like to lie under the old towers too—with the doves wheeling above us, and the faint, faint murmur of the sea coming over the Gate of Our Lady. With Molly's sweet and faithful heart, silent too, somewhere near, and his! Oh, in death surely I should sleep better with the same grass green above us! I remember his telling me about the young hectic student who had the 'genius for suffering'—the lad the red-gowned students carried through the snow to his rest. Did he ever dream of another who had that talent too? He never even knew I—cared! Long ago he has despised me and forgotten! Love never yet could stand contempt!"

And yet this was a very great lady, a brilliant member of London society, who had pushed her husband, it was said, into politics, and kept him in the forefront of things by sheer force of her wit and cleverness. The most brilliant members of the London world of art and literature, the most

At the High Altar

outstanding fighters in the political arena, were to be found at Lady Cantyre's parties, and she had an adoring husband, and a son and heir. The husband looked to her for every decision, and she guided him happily and faithfully through a very pleasant career, and made him a cheerful companion. She always said she liked to play fair; she would always play fair with one who had given her so much. She owed him his happiness, and she made it. And it was only when alone that the heart-hunger escaped, and the long sighs of an unwhispered aching—the great longing deeps of a woman's hunger for reciprocal love—found expression. All her life she would be leant upon, not lean. Cameron had seemed so strong!

Molly, thinking of the woman she loved, and would always love, detected the ache and the want, and she prayed that God would one day show her friend the way of content and peace. A way there is, even amid the thorns and the briers, as she had learned.

It was the end of the long spring day, and Molly had turned in at the smaller of the Cathedral gates, on her way home. There was to be a big university function that night, and St. Rule's graduates from all parts were coming to it. Molly had heard that

A Mystery of St. Rule's

the hotels were all full, that old students were flocking from all parts.

She was thinking, idly, of a certain function of much the same kind, as she stood for a moment on the spot where the high altar had been, looking at an old Celtic cross newly discovered. Her sweet pale face was upraised dreamily to the faint blue of the sky, when she heard a step behind her. It startled her a little, for it was near the hour for closing the Cathedral, and she had deemed herself alone. She turned round quickly, wondering who it was, and she found herself face to face with Neil Cameron! Cameron, bronzed, big, stalwart, apparently unchanged! And after all, how strangely natural it was to see him there! He came up at once, a great light shining in his eyes, an eager light, that grew into a strange rapture of joy as he gazed upon her and took her hands. At first there had been a mingled questioning, a wild questioning, which thrilled Molly and whitened her face; but once her hands were in his, Cameron seemed to forget all else. Eager words rushed to his lips as they had never rushed before.

"Molly! oh, Molly! I saw you from the gate. I was coming to see you. I was afraid, I have been afraid, ashamed, all these years, to write or come. And yet the moment I saw your face, my little

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girl, I forgot all but the joy of finding you! I have felt as if all the world had changed. I find you still the same!—the same dear face! oh, Molly, the same sweet face!”

“And you, Neil?”—she faltered a little, trying to remove her hands, trying hard to say something safe and conventional, something that would hide the rapture in her veins, the leaping joy that she had thought gone for ever—“are you not changed? You have been long away.”

“Yes,” he said. “But I have come to a truer knowledge of life, of what is best in life. I know now what I lost when I lost you. Molly, it was glamour, a moment of glamour. You had my heart, little love, my heart of hearts! I do not know how I dare tell you this, or come to you. I, who was fickle, weak, unworthy! But, of your pity, forgive me!”

“Don’t!” she cried softly; “please don’t! There is nothing to forgive.”

“Molly, tell me. I cannot wait—oh, not a day, an hour longer! I feel as if I had parted from you only yesterday! Can you forgive me? Can I, dare I, ask you to let me take up the threads? I love you. Dare I ask you to believe that now?” His hands had clasped her face; he looked down into the soft, liquid eyes. Above, the pigeons cooed in

Cathedral. All Nature
herself for sleep and res

Cameron read his ans
needed no words. And
pily they wandered hom

“I understand, Davida
has been gone some tim
Professor said that nigh
handed him a clean po
watched him put it into hi
months, I fancy. He is
man. I wonder if he kne
to the Royal Society?”

“I’m sure I dinna ken,
keep them waiting. The
Miss Molly, as pretty as
frock, is waiting. Are you
are on your face.”

“Quite ready I fancy.”

At the High Altar

"It might be ca'd dining wi' you," Davida said. "A scrap o' fish, nae fowl, and a spoonfu' o' omelette."

"Of course, of course I remember, I dined very well.—I wonder, now, what Cameron thinks; I shall just ask him—"

He wandered into the drawing-room, where Molly, in soft white *crêpe-de-chine*, was having her long suede gloves buttoned for her. Cameron was a very long time over the operation, and Molly's blushes were good to see.

But the Professor saw nothing. He advanced eagerly and touched Neil on the arm. He had a great opinion of the young Professor.

"My dear fellow, I wanted to ask your opinion—"

"Daddy dear, you know we are late. It isn't anything—anything deep, is it?"

"Not one moment, my dear—not one moment—"

"All right, professor! What is it?"

The old man paused, his hand on the other's silk lappet, his large, eager eyes bent on Cameron's face. Davida, fidgeting outside, finally opened the door and waited wrathfully. What daft query was this, to keep a cab waiting, and the whole University of St. Rule's yonder in the College Hall in festive attire?

A Mystery of St. Rule's

"What is your opinion"—the Professor spoke deliberately but with much *empressement* and eagerness—"upon Matter? Dear Cameron, I want very much to hear your views. What is your opinion on Matter?"—

David entered and took him firmly by the arm.

THE END



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